A YOUNG INVENTOR'S PLUCK

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Title: A Young Inventor's Pluck
or The Mystery of the Willington Legacy

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Release Date: February 20, 2013 [EBook #42142]

Language: English

Character set encoding: UTF-8

*** START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A YOUNG INVENTOR'S PLUCK ***

Produced by Al Haines.

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"I'LL TRY MY BEST," REPLIED JACK, TAKING UP HIS KIT OF TOOLS.

A Young Inventor's Pluck

OR

THE MYSTERY OF THE WILLINGTON LEGACY

BY

Arthur M. Winfield,

Author of "THE ROVER BOYS AT SCHOOL,"
"THE MISSING TIN BOX," "SCHOOLDAYS OF
FRED HARLEY," etc.

NEW YORK -- AKRON, O. -- CHICAGO
THE SAALFIELD PUBLISHING CO.

1901

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INTRODUCTION

My Dear Boys and Girls:--

"A YOUNG INVENTOR'S PLUCK" relates the adventures of a wide-awake American lad of a mechanical turn of mind, who suddenly finds himself thrown

upon his own resources and compelled to support not only himself, but likewise his sister.

Jack Willington's path is no easy one to tread. The bank in which the sister and brother have their little store of money deposited fails, and with this comes the shutting down of the tool works in which our hero is employed. To add to the lad's troubles, there is a large fire in the town and the youth is accused of incendiarism.

But Jack and his sister Deb are not without friends, and the fact that the boy is an inventor and has almost ready the model of a useful and valuable invention, aids him to secure his release, and then he goes forth to run down his enemies and to solve the mystery connected with a rich family legacy.

Generally speaking, life in a factory town is thought to be dull and monotonous, whereas the truth is, that it is usually full of interest and not devoid of excitement of a peculiar kind. In this tale I have tried to picture life in such a place truthfully, with all of its lights and its shadows, and I hope that my story will prove more or less instructive in consequence.

Affectionately your friend, ARTHUR M. WINFIELD.

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ILLUSTRATIONS.

"I'll try my best," replied Jack taking up his kit of tools . . . Frontispiece

"Well, sir, what is it?" he asked, hardly looking up

Jack was soon as busy as a bee, putting the machines in running order and overhauling other farming implements

"Been tellin' sthories about me!" he exclaimed. "Sayin' I sthole yer match-box an' set foire to old gray's house! Oi'll fix ye!"

With a quick spring he gave the young man a push that sent him spinning over backward

The body came within his reach, and leaning over, he stayed its progress

"Did you really go over them falls?" she continued, jerking her thumb in the direction

The miser of the island had lost his balance, and after vainly clutching the air to save himself, had floundered into the water and mud below

"I mean just this," replied Corrigan, catching her by the arm, "you are my prisoner and must do as I say"

With a strong push of his powerful arm, he sent the man flying into a corner

A YOUNG INVENTOR'S PLUCK

CHAPTER I.

THE SHUT DOWN

"Oh Jack! how blue you look!"

"I feel blue, Deb," answered Jack Willington, as he entered the door of his modest home and gave his sister the brotherly kiss he knew she was expecting.

"Is there something the matter up at the tool works, Jack?"

"Yes, Deb. The works are going to shut down."

"To shut down?" repeated the girl, her eyes wide open in affright, for she knew only too well what such a calamity meant. "When will they close?"

"To-morrow. In fact we have quit on the regular work already."

"And how long will the shut-down last?"

"Nobody knows. I asked Mr. Johnson--he's the foreman, you know--and he said he thought a month or six weeks, but he wasn't sure."

"A month! Oh, Jack, it's an awfully long time!"

And Deb Willington's face grew very grave.

"I know it is--longer than I care to remain idle, even if I could afford to, which I can't. But that's not the worst of it."

"No?"

"No; they didn't pay us for the last two weeks' work."

"Why not?"

"Johnson said that they wanted to pay off every man in full, and that the figuring would take several days."

"And you won't get any money till then?"

"Not a cent. My private opinion is that the company is in some sort of a financial difficulty, and only want to gain time. Mont didn't have a word to say about it when I asked him, and, I imagine he knows a good deal about his uncle's affairs."

Deb cast down her eyes in a meditative way.

"To-morrow is rent day," she said, after a pause.

"I know it. I've been thinking of it all the way home. How much have we got toward paying the six dollars?"

"Three dollars and a half." And Deb brought forth the amount from her small purse.

"Humph! I don't see what's to be done," mused Jack, as he removed his hat and sat down. "Mr. Hammerby will have to wait for his money."

"Will he?"

"I don't see what else he can do. But, aside from that, three dollars and a half won't keep us a month. I'll have to look elsewhere for work."

Deborah and John Willington were orphans. Their father had died some ten years before. He had been a strong, industrious and ingenious machinist, of a quiet nature, and at his demise left his wife and two children with a small property, which, however, was subject to a mortgage of several hundred dollars.

His widow found it no easy matter to get along. Jack was but seven years of age and Deb five, and, of course, could do little or nothing, except occasionally to "help mamma."

Mrs. Willington in her reduced circumstances had taken in sewing, and also opened a school for little children, and by these means had earned a scanty living for her family.

But it was not long before the strain began to tell upon the brave woman. She was naturally delicate, and grew weaker slowly but surely, until, eight years later, she quietly let slip the garment she was making, folded her hands, and peacefully went to join her husband in the Great Beyond.

Deb and Jack were terribly startled when the sad event occurred. They were utterly alone in the world. It was true that there were distant relatives upon their mother's side, but they had always been too proud to notice the Willington family, and now made no attempt to help the orphans.

Shortly after the mother's funeral, the mortgage on the homestead fell due, and as it could not be met, the place went under the auctioneer's hammer.

Realty in Corney, as the factory town was called, was not booming at the time, and, as a consequence, when all the costs were paid, only one hundred dollars and the furniture remained as a start in life for the two children.

They had no home, no place to go. What was to be done?

A kind neighbor spoke of adopting Deb, and another obtained for Jack a job in the Tool Company's works.

But the two would not separate. When Jack mentioned it, Deb sobbed and clung to him, until he declared that she should remain with him no matter what happened.

At this time Jack earned eight dollars a week, and had the prospect of a raise. With this amount they rented three rooms for six dollars a month, and Deb, young as she was, took upon herself the important duties of housekeeping.

Things moved crudely at first, but it was so nice to be together, to work for one another, that, excepting for their recent bereavement, which still hung as a heavy cloud over their lives, they lived as happily as "two bugs in a rug."

Jack thought the world of his sister Deb. He was a rather silent fellow, with a practical turn of mind, not given overmuch to fun making, and his sister's bright and cheerful way was just what was needed to lift his mind out of the drudge-rut into which it was wont to run.

He spent all his evenings in her company, either at home or, when the weather was fine, in strolling around Corney, or in attendance upon some entertainment that did not cost much money, and which gave Deb keen enjoyment. Sometimes, when he got the chance, he would do odd jobs at his bench on the sly, and then, with the extra money thus earned, would surprise Deb by buying her something which he knew she desired, but which their regular means would not afford.

Jack was now earning twelve dollars a week and they lived much more com-

fortably than before. During the past three years they had saved quite a neat sum, but a month of severe illness for Deb had now reduced them to their original capital of one hundred dollars, which was deposited in the Mechanics' Savings Bank of Corney--a sum that both had decided should not be touched unless it became absolutely necessary.

Young as he was, Jack understood the machinist's trade thoroughly. He took a lively interest in his work, and the doing of jobs on his own account had led him to erect a small workbench at home.

Here he often experimented upon various improvements in machinery, hoping at some time to invent that which might bring him in a substantial return.

One of his models--a planing machine attachment--was nearly completed, and this had been considerably praised by Mr. Benton, a shrewd speculator in inventions of various kinds.

"I'm afraid we'll have to draw part of that hundred dollars from the bank," observed Jack as the two were eating the neat supper Deb had prepared. "I hate to do it, but I don't see any way out of it."

"It does seem a shame, after we've kept it so long," returned his sister. "But do as you think best. Only, Jack, dear, please don't worry. It will all come out right in the end."

Her brother had laid down his knife and fork and was resting his chin on his hand in deep meditation.

"You're right, Deb," he exclaimed starting up, "and I ought to be thankful for what we have got, especially for having such a good little sister to ease things up."

"Say, Jack," suddenly began Deb, struck with an idea, "you are so handy with the tools, why don't you open a little shop of your own? Wouldn't it pay?"

Jack's face brightened more than it had for many a day.

"I'm glad you said that," he replied. "I've often thought of it. But I hated to give up a certainty like my wages for----"

"Yes, but now----" began Deb.

"One misfortune gives me a chance to tempt another." He gave a sorry little laugh. "Is that what you mean?"

"You'll get along--never fear."

"There ought to be a chance, true enough. I could sharpen tools, repair lawn mowers and bicycles, and mend all sorts of things. There is no such shop in Corney as yet, and it ought to pay."

"How much would it cost to start?" asked Deb, with great interest.

"I think fifty or sixty dollars would put me into shape to do small work. I have most of the tools, and would only need a lathe and one or two other things--that I could get second-hand."

"I'll tell you what to do then," was Deb's conclusion; "to-morrow morning, go down to the bank and draw out seventy-five dollars. Then we'll pay the rent, and you can take the rest and try your luck."

"Yes, but----"

"No buts, Jack; I'm willing to put up with whatever comes--bad luck as well as good. I'm sure you'll succeed."

"If your good wishes count for anything, I certainly shall," exclaimed Jack, earnestly. "I think I can rent a shop for ten dollars a month, or, maybe, if I pay a little more, I can get one with living rooms attached, which would be cheaper than hiring two places."

"And nicer, too," returned Deb; "you wouldn't have to go so far for dinner, and I could attend to customers while you were away."

The pair talked in this strain for over an hour. His sister's sanguine way of looking at the matter made the young machinist feel as if perhaps the shut-down was not such a bad thing, after all, and might prove the turning point to something better than they had ever before known.

The next morning, for the first time in several years, Jack had breakfast late. It was soon over, and then he put on his good clothes and started for the bank.

The streets were thronged with idle men. The Corney Tool Company employed nearly a thousand persons--in fact, it was by far the principal factory in the place--and to have all these employes thrown out of work was a calamity discussed by everyone.

The Mechanics' Savings Bank had been organized by Mr. Felix Gray, the owner of the tool works, who presided over both places. He was a man of fifty, with an unusually sharp and irritable disposition.

As Jack approached the bank he noticed a large crowd collected in and around the building.

"I suppose, as they can't get their pay, they want to withdraw some of their savings," was his thought as he drew nearer.

An instant later a queer cry came from the interior of the bank, and it was quickly taken up by those outside.

"What is it?" asked the young machinist, of a bystander.

"They've suspended payment," was the short reply.

"What!" gasped Jack, in horror. "You don't mean it?"

But at the same time the crowd cried out loudly, in angry tones:

"The bank's burst! She's gone up for good! No money for the poor man! We

can all starve!"

CHAPTER II.

FOR THE SAKE OF HOME

"Can this be possible? Has the bank really burst?"

Over and over Jack asked himself the question. Then the words of the crowd echoed and re-echoed through his ears. Yes, the bank had suspended payment. There was no money for him--no money for anyone!

"It's too bad!" he groaned. "What will Deb say?"

The thought of his sister gave him another pang. Without money and without work, how could he continue to take care of her?

"Oh! Jack, me b'y, not wan pinny av me two hundred dollars will they give me at all," exclaimed Andy Mosey, a fellow-workman, bitterly.

"How did it happen?" asked the young machinist.

"No wan knows. Oi guess old Gray is in a toight hole, an' is usin' the bank's money to get him out."

Andy Mosey was a heavy-set Irishman, with a bloated, red face and fiery hair and beard. His work brought him into daily contact with the young machinist, but Jack did not like the man, first on account of his drinking habit, and secondly, because he suspected the Irishman of having stolen from the pocket of his jumper a silver match safe--a highly-valued Willington heirloom.

"It's a bad business, and no mistake."

The speaker was Dennis Corrigan, a pattern maker. He was a brother-in-law to Mosey, but much more educated, and somewhat refined in appearance as well.

"Yes, indeed," returned Jack.

"How do they expect us to live if they don't pay us our wages or let us draw our savings either?"

"Old Gray will pay dearly fer this," put in Andy Mosey, with a wicked look in his eye; "oi'll vow he'll be moighty sorry for this day's worruk ere long."

Jack elbowed his way up the bank steps and into the building. The cashier's window was closed, and behind the glass this notice was pasted up:

"*Depositors are hereby notified that owing to the unexpected run upon this bank, no further payments will be made until the more available assets are converted into cash.*"

The crowd were all talking loudly and excitedly, and Jack tried in vain to obtain definite information concerning the cause for the suspension.

At length, sick at heart, he returned to the sidewalk, where Andy Mosey, the worse for several glasses of liquor, again addressed him.

"Not wan pinny av me two hundred dollars, Jack, me b'y!" he repeated in a heavy voice; "an' they call it a free counthry! Sure it's only free fer rich people to rob the poor!"

"It's rough," replied Jack.

"Old Gray will pay dearly fer it, mark me wurruds!"

"What will you do?"

"Never moind, Jack, me b'y! Thrust Andy Mosey to get square wid the ould villian!"

Jack retraced his steps homeward with slow and unwilling steps. All his bright hopes of the past hour had been dashed to naught. No money meant no start in business, and with a thousand men idle what chances were there of finding employment?

"If I had a few dollars in my pocket I might try some other town," he thought. "But without some money, it's hard lines, sure enough."

Jack would not have felt it so much had he been alone, but with Deb depending upon him, his responsibility seemed more than doubled.

Their home was on the second floor of a large apartment house standing upon one of the side streets of Corney. As Jack ascended the stairs he heard talking in the kitchen.

"Wonder who is here? Visitors of some kind," he thought.

Entering, the young machinist found Mr. Hammerby, the house-agent, in earnest conversation with Deb.

Mr. Hammerby was a short, dapper business man, small in form, and a person of few words.

"Yes, I never allow a rent day to go by," he was saying. "People who hire from me must expect to pay promptly."

"But sometimes people fall ill, and get behind----" began Deb.

"True, but that's not my fault, and I never--ah, here is your brother at last. Good morning, Mr. Willington."

"Good morning, Mr. Hammerby," returned Jack, soberly, and with a sinking heart. "You came for the rent, I suppose."

"Yes, sir, always prompt, you know," replied the agent, rubbing his hands

together.

"I told him you had just gone to get the money," put in Deb.

"I--I'm sorry, but I can't pay you today," said Jack, as calmly as he could, but with a worried glance at his sister.

"Oh, Jack, what has happened?" burst out Deb, growing pale.

"The bank has stopped payment."

"And you expected to get your money from that place?" asked Mr. Hammerby.

"Yes, sir."

"Your sister told me you had gone out for it, but did not tell me where."

"Can't you get any money, Jack?" asked Deb, catching his arm.

"Not a cent."

The tears started in the girl's eyes. Here was indeed a blow.

"Well, I'm sorry, but I must have the rent," said Mr. Hammerby, firmly.

"I can't pay it," replied Jack. "If I had the money, nothing would please me more. But I haven't got any pay for the past two weeks' work, and I have but three dollars and a half, and that we must keep for living purposes."

"Humph! When do you propose to pay?"

"In a few days. Just as soon as I get my money from the factory."

"That won't suit me. If I don't have my money by to-night I'll serve you a three-days' notice to quit."

It may seem strange that Mr. Hammerby should be so hard upon his tenants, but the truth was, he understood more of the factory and the bank affairs than was generally known.

He was well aware that it would be a long time before cash could be had at either place.

"But surely you wouldn't turn us out for being behind just this once!" exclaimed Jack. "We have paid promptly for three years."

"I can't make any allowance. It's pay or leave. I might have got more than you pay for these rooms, but I let you have them at a low figure because I thought you would be prompt."

"But Mr. Gray owns this building," put in Deb, eagerly; "surely he will not allow his own workmen, to whom money is due, to be put out."

"He doesn't bother his head about it," returned Mr. Hammerby, with assumed dignity. "He expects me to obey orders, and those orders are to collect or give notice."

"Well, I haven't the money," repeated Jack.

"I'll step in in the morning," went on the agent, "and then it's money or notice. Good day."

And without further words Mr. Hammerby left the apartment. The minute

the door was closed Deb burst into tears.

"They will set us into the street!" she sobbed. "Was ever a person so cruel before! Oh, Jack, what shall we do? What shall we do?"

Jack sank into a chair without replying. His mind was busy trying to devise some means of averting the blow that appeared so imminent. Though it cut him to the heart to see his sister so distressed, he could offer her no comforting hope.

"I'm going up to see Mr. Gray," he said, finally, "I'll tell him just how the matter stands. I don't believe if he knew the particulars that he would let Mr. Hammerby put us out."

"If he did he'd be the hardest-hearted man in Corney," declared Deb, between her sobs.

For Jack to think, was to act, and in a few seconds he was ready to depart.

"Shall I go along?" asked his sister, hesitatingly.

"I guess not. You can meet me at the corner if you like," replied Jack.

Mr. Gray's residence was situated in the fashionable part of the town. It was an elegant establishment throughout, and Jack was not a little awed by the sumptuous surroundings.

He was ushered into the hall, and found himself among half a dozen others, all awaiting an interview with the manufacturer.

It was fully half an hour before he was told to enter the library. He found Mr. Felix Gray seated at a desk which was deep with letters and documents.

The manufacturer was a stout man of fifty, with a certain sullen, bull-dog cast of countenance.

"Well, sir, what is it?" he asked, hardly looking up.

[image]

"WELL, SIR, WHAT IS IT?" HE ASKED, HARDLY LOOKING UP.

In a brief but clear manner Jack stated his case. Mr. Gray hardly heard him out.

"Mr. Willington," he said sharply, "I never interfere with my agents' doings. They have entire charge. Besides, it would be folly for me to make your case an exception. If I did so, any other tenant might ask the same privilege."

"Yes, but if you would only give me an order for some of the money due me, or for my savings----" began the young machinist, growing desperate.

Mr. Gray drew himself up.

"You must get that in the regular way," he returned coolly. "I never make exceptions to my rules. Good morning."

And before he could realize it, Jack was out on the street again with bitter defeat written in every line of his handsome face.

CHAPTER III.

A RESULT OF A FIRE

At the corner Jack met Deb, whose anxiety had caused her to follow him close to the Gray mansion.

"My! how long you've been!" she exclaimed, and then with a keen glance into his face: "Did he---- Did he----"

"He said he couldn't do a thing, that it was all in the agent's hands," burst out Jack, "He is meaner than mean. He will let that man put us out even when he owes us more than the amount of the rent. Well, it may be law, but it isn't justice and he shall not do it!"

And the young machinist shut his teeth in grim determination.

"If you can't get the money from the bank, I suppose you can't go into business for yourself," said Deb, when they reached home.

"That's true enough. Before the shut-down I might have borrowed money, but now I guess all our friends need every cent they have."

"Can't we raise some?" Deb's eyes wandered around the apartment. Jack gave a dry little laugh.

"Not on this stuff," he replied. "But we're not reduced to that yet." He walked over to where the model he was working on stood. "Wish this was finished. I believe I can make a neat sum out of this invention."

"How long will it take to complete it?"

"Can't tell. It depends on one's ideas. But I'm going out."

"Where?"

"To look for work."

In a moment Jack had descended to the sidewalk. He found the streets swarming with people, and as he had before thought, with a thousand men idle, what chance was there of getting work? Finding that every place in Corney was full he determined to try Redrock, another manufacturing town, situated on the Camel Falls river, several miles below the present place. The road between the two places followed the river bank. As Jack trudged along close to the water, he heard a sudden cry for help.

Looking ahead he saw that one of the rear wheels of a wagon had come off, and the driver, horses and vehicle were all in danger of being dumped into the stream. It was but a moment's work for the young machinist to rush up, and by catching the horses' heads, to turn them in such a way that the turnout righted itself in the center of the road.

"Thank you, young man!" exclaimed the aged farmer, who was driving, as he sprang to the ground. "That was a narrow escape, and no mistake."

"Your wagon is pretty well damaged," observed Jack as he examined the shattered axle.

"Well, troubles never come singly." replied Farmer Farrell, for such was his name. "This morning something got into the patent rake so it wouldn't work; then the grindstone got cranky, and now this. But thanks to Providence, I'm safe. I reckon I'll have to go back for the other rig, though. Going my way?"

"Yes, sir. I'm bound for Redrock to look for work."

As the two walked along, Jack related what had happened in Corney.

"Well, I declare! I'm lucky any way," declared Farmer Farrell, "I got my money out of the bank a month ago. It's too bad, though, for you. What did you say you were?"

"I'm a machinist," replied Jack, and then suddenly: "Perhaps I can fix up your patent rake and your grindstone. I'll do a good job and won't overcharge you."

To this Farmer Farrell, who was taken by Jack's appearance, agreed, and a few minutes later led the way up a lane to a well-stocked farm.

Down in the barn the young machinist found the things that needed repairing. He looked everything over carefully.

"I'll bring my tools to-morrow and fix them up," he said. "If I get work in Redrock I'll do the work early in the morning or after I quit."

"And the cost?"

"About five or six dollars."

"Cheap enough. Go ahead."

"I will. I'll be on hand early in the morning and do a good job," replied Jack.

The young machinist met with no success at Redrock, and returned in an hour to Corney. Deb was pleased to hear that some work, at least, had been procured.

"It will pay the rent anyway," said Jack, "and that's something. Perhaps, too, it may get me some more jobs like it."

"That's so," replied Deb, her face brightening.

In the evening Jack worked on his model. But he went to bed at ten o'clock, so as to be up early the next morning.

"Jack! Jack! Wake up!"

It was Deb's voice from the next room that aroused him in the middle of the

night.

"There is a big fire over on the hill," she continued, "just look out of the window."

But Jack was already up.

"You're right!" he replied. "It's a whopper, too!" he continued, as the flames shot skyward, making all as bright as day. "I'll have to go," he added.

"Must you?"

"Certainly, it's my duty to serve."

For Jack was a duly enlisted member of the Corney Volunteer Fire Department.

He hurried into his clothing as rapidly as possible, and jumped down the stairs three at a time.

"Don't get hurt!" called Deb after him.

The engine house was but a few blocks away. When Jack arrived there, he found that the machine had been dragged out into the street but no further.

"Why don't you catch hold?" he called to a crowd of men who stood on the sidewalk.

"It's old Gray's house!" exclaimed one man, "and it can burn to the ground for all I care."

"He don't help us; now let him help himself," put in another.

"Oh, pshaw! It won't do any good to act that way!" said Jack. "Come, catch hold like men."

Jack was naturally a leader, and when he grasped the rope three other young fellows followed, and in a moment the engine was on its way.

"It's too bad it's Mr. Gray's house," thought the machinist. "It will make him harder-hearted than ever."

He gave no thought as to how the conflagration had originated, and did his best to get the engine to the spot.

But, as has been stated, the place was up hill, and by the time they had made their way along the unpaved road, the fire had gained such headway that it was useless to pour water on the burning building, and all attention was directed to saving the adjoining property.

The heat was intense, and Jack, who was often at the nozzle of the hose, suffered greatly from this and the smoke.

In an hour the fire was declared under control, and a little later the order came to take up the hose and go home.

Jack worked with a will. He had done his duty, and now he was anxious to return, tell Deb all about it, and get to bed again.

While helping to wind the hose upon its carriage, he was suddenly approached by Mr. Gray, accompanied by a stranger.

"There he is!" were Mr. Gray's first words, addressed to the stranger.

The man laid his hand upon Jack's shoulder.

"I want you," he said, quietly.

"What for?" asked Jack.

"I arrest you for setting fire to Mr. Gray's house," was the startling reply.

"Arrest me!" exclaimed the young machinist. "What do you mean? I never set fire to any one's house."

"Oh, yes, you did," put in the manufacturer. "Only you didn't expect to be caught."

"It's false, I----"

"It's true. You shall suffer heavily for this night's work," went on Mr. Gray, bitterly. "We'll see if the law allows tenants who won't pay their rents to set their landlords' houses on fire! Watch him Parker, don't let him escape you!"

"Mr. Gray, I never----" began Jack.

"Come along," broke in the officer, roughly. "You can do your talking in the morning."

And without further words Jack was marched off to the Corney jail.

CHAPTER IV.

BAD NEWS FOR DEB

After her brother Jack had gone, Deb stood by the window a long time, watching the progress of the fire. She beheld the flames shoot up, heard the shrill whistle of the engines, and the shouts of the firemen, and finally saw the light subside.

She opened the window, and from the conversation of the passers-by she learned that it was Mr. Felix Gray's mansion that had been burned.

The little bronze clock upon the kitchen shelf struck four.

"Jack will be returning soon," she thought, "and he'll be awfully tired, too."

An hour passed. She had put on a loose wrapper and sat in the rocker, moving gently forward and backward. Presently the curly head began to nod, and after one or two feeble attempts to rouse up, Deb sank calmly into the land of dreams.

When she awoke, she found it was broad daylight, and the tread of many feet upon the pavement outside told that work had already begun.

"Eight o'clock!" exclaimed the girl. "What can keep Jack so long?"

Then the thought struck her that her brother had returned and retired without waking her, but a glance revealed the empty bed.

Deb's face blanched a trifle as the idea crossed her mind that maybe something had happened, after all. Fires were such dreadful things, with falling chimneys and half-burned staircases, and Jack was so daring, and so ready to risk his life for the benefit of others.

"I'll go down to Mrs. Snitzer's and find out about it," was her conclusion, and locking the door she descended the stairs.

Mrs. Snitzer was a German woman, who, with her husband and three stalwart sons, occupied the floor below. She was a stout, kindly-faced woman of about fifty, had been Deb's neighbor for a year, and took a genuine interest in the girl and her brother.

"Your brudder no got home yet from der fire?" she said, after Deb had stated the object of her morning call; "I thought der fire vas out long ago. Mine boys come home, and vent to ped again, aput five o'clock. Da don't work now, so da say: 'Mudder, ve take a goot sleep for vonce in our lifes;'" she added, with a broad smile.

"Jack's out of work, too," said Deb, soberly.

"Yah? Vat a shame! Nefer mind, it don't last forefer. Come, have some coffee mit me. My man ist gone out for the baber. He come back soon."

The good woman set out one of her low chairs, and knowing that Mrs. Snitzer's invitations were genuine, the girl sat down, and allowed herself to be helped to a bowl of the steaming beverage, accompanied by several slices of sugared zweibach.

Just as the two were finishing Mr. Snitzer came in, paper in hand.

His face grew troubled upon seeing Deb.

"I vas sorry for you," he said, approaching her.

"Sorry for me?" repeated the girl, with a puzzled look. "Why, Mr. Snitzer?"

"Gracious! Didn't you hear?" returned the man, dropping his paper in astonishment.

"Hear what?" faltered Deb.

Mr. Snitzer spoke in German to his wife, who jumped to her feet.

"Nein! nein!" exclaimed the woman, vehemently. "He nefer done dot--nefer in his whole life!"

And then as gently as possible Mrs. Snitzer related how Jack had been accused by Mr. Felix Gray of setting fire to the mansion, and was now languishing in the town jail.

Deb's outburst was dreadful to behold. She threw herself upon the old German woman's breast and sobbed as if her heart would break. Her Jack--her own dear brother, in prison! The only one she had in the wide world taken away from

her, and sent to a criminal's cell! It was too horrible to realize.

"How cruel of them to do it!" she moaned. "And he is innocent, too. He was home when the fire broke out;" and she shook her head in despair.

"Of course he didn't do it," said Mr. Snitzer. "All der men say so. Jack vas as steady as anypody. I dink it vas some of der hot-headed men vas guilty."

"So don't cry, my dear girl," added Mrs. Snitzer, sympathetically. "It vill come out all right by der end;" and she took one corner of her clean gingham apron and wiped the tear-stained cheeks.

"Where is the--the jail?" asked Deb presently, in a low voice.

Mr. Snitzer described its location.

"You don't vas going there!" exclaimed the German woman.

"Yes, I am," declared the girl, resolutely, with a sudden, strong look in her beautiful eyes.

"But it vas a terrible bad blace," Mrs. Snitzer ventured to remark.

"I don't care," replied Deb. "I won't mind going where Jack is. I must see if I can't do something for him."

Deb ran up stairs. Her heart was full of fear, and beat wildly.

She exchanged her wrapper for a suitable dress, and arranged her hair. As she was adjusting her hat, there was a knock on the door, and thinking Mrs. Snitzer had come up, she bid the person enter.

"Ah, just in time, I see!" was the exclamation, made in Mr. Hammerby's voice.

Deb's face clouded even more than before.

"Oh, dear, you here?" she ejaculated in vexed tones.

"Yes; on hand, as I always am," replied the agent, removing his hat. "I suppose you are ready with the rent?"

"No, I haven't the money," replied Deb. Somehow it was all she could manage to say.

"Your brother was unable to raise the amount?"

"He hasn't had time to try."

"I'm sorry, but as I said before 'business is business,' and I'll have to serve the notice," and drawing a paper from his pocket, Mr. Hammerby handed it over.

It was a regular notice drawn up in due form, demanding that in three days they quit the place.

Deb read it, but in her excitement did not notice that the avaricious agent had dated it one day back.

"And must we leave in three days?" she faltered.

"Most assuredly--unless you raise the cash."

"But where will we go?" continued the girl hopelessly.

"That's for you to decide," was the answer. Mr. Hammerby had gone through

so many "scenes," as he termed them, that the evident suffering of the person he addressed did not affect him.

"But we haven't got anywhere to go," burst out Deb.

"Well, that's not my fault, is it?"

"No, but----"

"Then it's pay or leave," was the cold reply.

"What's up now, Mr. Hammerby?" asked a quiet voice from the hallway.

It was the nephew of the tool manufacturer who had come. His name was Monteray Gray--the Monteray being generally shortened to Mont. He was a young man of twenty, and kept the books for the shipping department of the tool works.

"What, Mr. Gray, is that you?" exclaimed the agent, taken back at the sudden interruption. "Oh, it's only the same old story of no money for the landlord," he added.

Mont looked at Deb. He knew both her and Jack very well.

"I am sorry to hear it," he said, with a pained face.

"It's all because of the shut-down at the factory," explained Deb, who, for a purely womanly reason wanted to set herself right with the young man.

In a few short words she made him acquainted with the situation. Involuntarily Mont's hand went down in his pocket, and then he suddenly remembered that he had no money with him.

"See here, Mr. Hammerby," he said, "you had better take this notice back. There is no doubt that you will get your money."

"Can't do it," replied the agent, with a decided shake of the head.

"But my uncle would never consent to having them put out," persisted the young man.

"Mr. Gray's orders are to give notice to any one who doesn't pay," returned Mr. Hammerby, grimly; "I'm only doing as directed."

"But this is an outrage!" exclaimed Mont. "My uncle virtually owes Mr. Willington twenty odd dollars, and here you intend to put him out for a few dollars rent."

"You can see your uncle about it, if you wish. I shall stick to my orders."

"Then you won't stop this notice?"

"No."

"Very well," replied Mont, quietly.

"I'm hired to do certain things, and I'm going to do them," continued the agent. "Besides, I just heard this morning that this fellow is locked up for setting fire to your uncle's house. I should not think that you would care to stick up for him," he went on.

"But I do care," returned the young man, with a sudden show of spirit. "He

is a friend of mine, and I don't believe him guilty."

"Humph! Well, maybe. It's none of my business; all I want is the rent, and if they can't pay they must leave," said Mr. Hammerby, bluntly. "Good morning," he continued to Deb, and without waiting for more words, turned and left the apartment.

"I am sorry that my uncle has such a hard-hearted man for his agent," observed Mont to Deb with a look of chagrin on his face.

"So am I," she replied, and then suddenly; "Oh, Mont, Jack is----"

"I know all about it," he interrupted. "I've just been down to see him. He gave me this note for you," and Mont handed the note to Deb.

CHAPTER V.

FINDING BAIL

Jack hardly realized what arrest meant until he heard the iron door clang shut, and found himself in a stone cell, scarcely six feet square, with nothing but a rough board upon which to rest.

He sat down with a heart that was heavier than ever before. The various misfortunes of the day had piled themselves up until he thought they had surely reached the end, and now, as if to cap the climax, here he was arrested for the burning of a place that he had worked like a beaver for two hours to save.

He wondered how Mr. Felix Gray had come to make the charge against him. He could think of no reason that could excite suspicion, saving, perhaps, his rather hasty words in the tool manufacturer's library the afternoon previous.

"I suppose he thinks I did it out of revenge," thought the young machinist; "but then there are men--like Andy Mosey, for instance--who have threatened far more than I. Guess I can clear myself--by an alibi, or some such evidence."

Nevertheless, he chafed under the thought of being a prisoner, and felt decidedly blue when Deb entered his mind. What would his sister think of his absence, and what would she say when told what had happened?

"Maybe I can send her word," he said to himself, and knocked loudly upon the door.

The watchman was just asleep on a sofa in an adjoining room and did not hear him.

Failing to attract attention in this way, Jack began to kick, and so vigorously

did he apply his heels that he awoke the sleeper with such a start that he came running to the spot instantly.

"Can I send a message home?" asked the young machinist.

"Not till morning," was the surly reply; "is that all you want?"

"Yes. Isn't there any way at all?" persisted Jack. "I have a sister who will worry over my absence."

The man gaped and opened his eyes meditatively.

"You might if you was willing to pay for it," he replied, slowly.

"I have no money with me," replied Jack, feeling in his pockets to make sure.

"Have to wait till morning then," was the short reply, and the young machinist was once more left alone.

He was utterly tired out, and in the course of half an hour fell into a troubled slumber, from which he did not awaken until called.

"Some one to see you," were the watchman's words, and the door opened to admit Mont Gray.

Mont was a tall, thin young man. He had a large brow, deep, dark eyes, and a strangely earnest face. He was quiet in his way, attended punctually to his office duties, and was on much better terms with the hands at the tool works than his uncle had ever been. He was the only son of Mr. Felix Gray's youngest brother, who had died a widower some twelve years before--died, some said, and put out of the way, others whispered. That there was some mystery connected with those times was certain. Rumor had it that Felix Gray had crowded his brother out of the business in which he originally owned a half share. This transaction was followed by Monterey Gray's sudden disappearance. Felix Gray gave it as his opinion that his brother had departed for Australia, a place of which he had often spoken.

Young Mont--he was named after his father--had been taken to live with his uncle, who kept bachelor's hall in fine style.

The boy got along as best he could under the sharp guardianship of Mr. Felix Gray, who, as soon as he could, placed Mont at one of the desks, where he was now allowed to earn his board and four dollars a week.

His position at the tool works brought him into daily contact with Jack; and, during the past two years, a warm friendship had sprung up between them. He knew all about the young machinist's ambition, and had spent many an evening at the Willingtons' apartments watching Jack work, and chatting to Deb, with whom, as is known, he was on good terms.

"Hello, Mont!" exclaimed Jack, "what brings you here? Did your uncle send you?"

"Send me!" said the young man. "No, indeed! he doesn't even suspect I'm here; if he did he would raise a row, sure."

"Then you don't believe I'm guilty?" began Jack, somewhat relieved.

"Humph! Nonsense! I only wonder uncle Felix thinks so," returned Mont. "It seems to me that the evidence of a match safe is a mighty slim one."

This was news to the young machinist.

"Why, what about a match safe?" he asked.

"Didn't you hear?" was Mont's question, in surprise. "They found a match safe with your last name on it, in the basement."

Jack sprang up in astonishment.

"Was it a small silver safe, with a bear's head on one side, and a lion's on the other?" he asked.

"Yes; then it is yours?"

"Yes, it's mine. But I haven't seen it for nearly a month," burst out the young machinist. "I missed it out of my pocket, and suspected Andy Mosey of having taken it, though I could not prove it. But I see it all now. Mosey was speaking of revenge up at the bank yesterday morning, and he has done the deed, and used my property to throw suspicion on me."

"But he wouldn't do such a mean thing unless he had a grudge against you," remarked Mont.

"He has several of them. More than once, when he was drunk, and came interfering around my work, I threatened to report him. Besides, I have the job he always thought his son Mike should have."

"I see. But can you prove that he had the safe?"

"I don't think I can. But I believe I can prove that I lost it, and was home when the fire started?"

"Does Deb know you are here?" asked Mont, suddenly.

"Not unless some one else has let her know. Will you take her a note?"

"Certainly; I was going to suggest that very thing. I intended to call on her."

Jack took the sheet of paper that Mont supplied and wrote a few words of cheer to his sister.

"I'll tell her the particulars," said the young man, as he pocketed the letter. "Is there anything else you want done?"

"Nothing now. Maybe there will be later on."

"I'll do what I can for you," continued Mont, "even if my uncle doesn't like it;" and he stepped out of the cell.

Half an hour later Jack was brought out for examination. The court room was crowded with the now idle men, and many were the expressions of sympathy for the young machinist, and denunciation for Mr. Felix Gray's hasty action.

The tool manufacturer himself did not appear. The officer who made the arrest said that the excitement of the past two days had made the plaintiff quite ill.

The hearing was a brief one. The match safe was the only evidence produced

against Jack, and as he had no means of proving his innocence then and there, it was decided to hold him to wait the action of the grand jury, three weeks later. Bail was fixed at one thousand dollars--a sum that was thought amply sufficient to keep any one from becoming his bondsman.

Meanwhile, Mont had delivered the note, as already recorded, and while being led out of the court room, Jack recognized the young man in the crowd, and an instant later found Deb at his side.

"Oh, Jack!" was all the poor girl could say, and clinging to his arms, she began to sob outright.

To see Deb cry made the young machinist feel worse than did his incarceration. He drew his sister to one side--away from the public gaze, and comforted her the best he could.

But the thought of going to prison was too terrifying to be subdued.

"Three weeks before they will hear what you have to say!" she exclaimed. "If you could only find that Mosey!"

"But he has left," put in Mont; "I tried everywhere to find him. Maybe you can get bail."

"I can't get it while I'm in prison," returned Jack, gloomily.

"I'll take you anywhere you wish to go," said the under-sheriff, who had him in charge. He was a married man, had daughters of his own, and Deb's anguish went straight to his heart.

Jack thought a moment. "Perhaps I might get Mr. Benton to go on my bond," he said.

The man he referred to was the wealthy speculator who had examined the model and praised the invention.

"But he would want security. Perhaps I'd have to sign over my rights to him," he continued with a sigh.

"It would be a shame to do that," said Mont. "You expect so much from the patent."

"But you wouldn't lose it unless you ran away," put in Deb; "and of course you're not going to do that."

Jack gave another sigh.

"I'll go and see him anyway," he said.

CHAPTER VI.

HOME ONCE MORE

A little later Jack and Mont separated, and in company with the constable, the young machinist called on Mr. Benton at the Coney House.

The speculator listened attentively to Jack's story. He was shrewd, a close reader of human nature, and thought he saw a chance of securing a bargain or of placing the embryo inventor under obligation to him.

"Tell you what I'll do," he said. "Give me a paper securing to me your invention if you don't turn up at the proper time, and I'll go your bond, providing----" and here Mr. Benton paused.

"What?" asked Jack eagerly.

"Providing you give me a half interest in it now."

Jack staggered back.

"A half interest?"

"That's what I said."

"But, sir----"

"You haven't got to accept my offer if you don't wish to," was the apparent indifferent reply.

Had he thought only of himself Jack would have refused. To give up that for which he had worked for years was terribly hard.

But Deb, dear Deb, what would become of her if he did not accept?

"I'll do it," he said, shortly. And then, with a sudden thought: "But you must give me a money consideration."

"How much?" asked the man of means.

"One hundred dollars." Jack knew Mr. Benton would offer less.

"Too much! I'll give you twenty-five."

"No; a hundred."

"Make it fifty. I can't spare a cent more. Besides, the thing may not be worth a dollar."

"Or several thousand," put in Jack. "But I accept the offer."

"Very well. I'll pay you the money to-morrow. I'm short to-day."

Knowing that with all his sharp business practice Mr. Benton was a man of his word, the young machinist did not object to waiting for his cash.

In his excitement he forgot all about Mr. Hammerby and the rent that must be paid.

It was fully an hour before the necessary papers were drawn up and signed, and then with hasty steps Jack made his way home.

Deb met him at the door, and at once he had to give her the particulars of what had been done.

"Never mind, anything is better than having you in prison," she said when he had finished. "And it may be just as well to have Mr. Benton for a partner now as to give him the chance of getting the whole thing later on."

Deb was delighted to learn that they were to receive fifty dollars in cash the next day.

"I'll be so glad to get rid of that horrid agent," she declared, and showed Jack the notice to quit.

In looking it over he discovered that it had been dated the day before.

"The mean fellow!" he exclaimed. "He thinks to get us out one day sooner than the law allows. Won't he be astonished when I pull out the roll of bills and pay him?"

In anticipation of the money soon to be received, and in honor of Jack's release, Deb prepared quite an elaborate dinner.

It nearly took her breath away when she discovered that the outlay footed up to nearly a dollar--a large sum for them. But then her brother did delight in cutlets, with potatoes and green corn, and somehow the table wouldn't have looked complete without some stewed prunes and a pudding-dessert--the latter just fixed to tickle Jack's palate.

During the meal Mont slipped in, and was compelled to sit down with them. He was delighted to see the young machinist free, but shook his head over the price that had been paid for liberty.

"What do you intend to do now?" he asked.

"Find Andy Mosey, if I can, and have him arrested," replied Jack. "It is the only way, I believe, that I can clear myself."

"It isn't likely you will find him," remarked the young man. "He will no doubt keep shady for a while."

"I shan't look for him to-day, excepting to strike a clue," was the young machinist's reply.

After the meal was finished, and Mont had gone, Jack announced his intention to do the repairs that he had promised Farmer Farrell.

"I might as well do them at once," he said to Deb, "it will be several dollars in pocket, and we need all the money we can get now. If this case goes to trial I'll have to hire a lawyer, and they charge heavily."

"So, I've heard," replied Deb, "but I wouldn't mind that if only you get free."

"I'll try my best," replied Jack taking up his kit of tools.

"When will you be back?" she asked as he started to go.

"I can't say. It depends on the job. Don't worry if it is late."

"All right; I'll keep the supper warm till you come."

So young, and yet a perfect housekeeper!

"She'll make some fellow a good wife one of these days," said Jack to himself as he strode along.

It was a fine day, and the walk by the river side was a delightful one, but the young machinist scarcely noticed the surroundings. His mind was busy with

the numerous difficulties that had risen round him, and he endeavored to lay out a definite plan of action by which to extricate himself.

When he arrived at the farm, he found his acquaintance of the previous day hard at work on the patent rake, which he had taken almost entirely apart.

"Just in time, young man!" exclaimed farmer Farrell, wiping the perspiration from his brow; "I thought, seeing as how you didn't come this morning, I'd see what I could do myself. But the job's a leetle too much for me. I've got the pesky thing apart and can't put two pieces together again."

"That's because you don't understand machinery and haven't the tools," replied the young machinist, and taking off his coat, he set to work at once.

He picked out the worn screws and bolts and substituted the new ones which he had brought. Then he sorted out the various parts in their proper order, and examined each critically.

"This bit of iron that guides the pressure spring is warped," he remarked. "Did the rake pull hard when the left side was lower than the right?"

"Yes, and squeaked, too."

"Then, that's the cause of it, and all the oil in the world wouldn't help it."

"Can you fix it?" asked the farmer, anxiously.

"I can if I can get a hot fire," replied Jack.

"I'll start it up at once," returned farmer Farrell, and he disappeared into the house.

When he had the fire well under way, Jack heated the part, and gave it the proper shape. Then he put the machine together, adjusted it carefully, and oiled the parts.

"Guess it's all right now," he said, lifting it over.

"We'll soon see," returned the farmer. Going to the barn he brought out one of the horses and hitched him to the machine. Then he mounted the seat and drove up and down the field several times.

"Works like a charm!" he declared. "You understand your trade and no mistake. How much for the job?"

This question was a stickler to Jack. He did not wish to ask too much, and he could not afford to ask too little.

"They would charge you three dollars at the machine shops," he said.

"Then I suppose that's what it's worth," continued the farmer. He was a whole-souled man, and was taken by Jack's outspoken manner. "But there's the other things to do yet," he continued.

"I know it; so we'll put this job at two dollars," said the young machinist.

"Never mind, I'm satisfied to pay three," laughed farmer Farrell. "Come into the barn; I've found quite a lot of stuff that needs doctoring, and I want you to put everything in first-class shape."

"I'll do my best."

Farmer Farrell led the way, and Jack was soon as busy as a bee, putting the machines in running order and overhauling other farming implements.

[image]

JACK WAS SOON AS BUSY AS A BEE, PUTTING THE MACHINES IN RUNNING ORDER AND OVERHAULING OTHER FARMING IMPLEMENTS.

"Why didn't you stop this morning?" asked the farmer, presently. He had intended going reaping, but Jack's handy use of tools interested him and made him linger.

In an easy manner that did not interfere with his work, the young machinist narrated the particulars of what had occurred to detain him.

"Well, now, that beats all! Trouble piling right up on top of ye! Wonder if I don't know this Mosey," continued the farmer, reflectively. "Is he a short man with a red beard?"

"Yes."

"Didn't he use to work over to Redrock?"

"I believe he did."

"Then I reckon I do. He's a bad egg. I used to sell the company he worked for hay for packing, and Mosey used to weigh it. Several times, when I was sure it was correct, he reported short, and when I spoke to him about it, he said it would never be right until I made it right with him, or, in other words, paid him for his good will."

"How did it turn out?" asked Jack, interested in the story.

"Oh, I spoke of it to the owners, but they believed his side of the story, and I lost their trade. But, all the same, he was discharged a month later for being drunk. If I ain't mistaken, I saw him pass early yesterday morning."

"I just wish I could lay hands on him," returned the young machinist; "I don't believe he would keep out of the way if he wasn't guilty."

"Maybe I'll see him," said the farmer. "If I do I'll watch him, and let you know."

It was close on to six o'clock when Jack finished the work. During the afternoon he had done jobs for which he asked five dollars, and farmer Farrell, who knew that he would have been charged twice as much in the town, paid the bill without a murmur.

Ten minutes later, with his kit under his arm, and the new five-dollar bill tucked safely in his vest pocket, the young machinist started for home.

The sun was setting, and the road, shaded for its greater part by large trees, was growing dark rapidly.

About midway of the distance to Corney stood an old mill, abandoned several years before, whose disused water-wheel still hung idly over the swiftly flowing river beneath.

It was a ghostly looking structure, and having the reputation of being haunted, was seldom visited, except by adventurous tourists and by amateur photographers, who remained at a safe distance to take views of the really picturesque locality.

As Jack passed the mill, he saw a man approach from the opposite direction. Judge of his astonishment when he recognized the individual as Andy Mosey!

He had seen the young machinist at the same instant, and turning rapidly from the road, he darted to one side of the mill.

For a second Jack stood still, hardly able to move. But he quickly recovered, and dropping his kit, which was heavy, he started in pursuit.

"He shall not escape me," he resolved. "He is larger than I, but I am not afraid to meet him face to face."

There was a large shed attached to the mill, and entering this, the young machinist looked carefully around to see if he could find any trace of the man. But a brief search assured him that the place had not been disturbed for months.

Passing through the partly open door, he entered the lower floor of the mill, and found himself in the presence of Dennis Corrigan, Mosey's brother-in-law.

"What do you want here?" demanded Corrigan, springing up from the bench upon which he had been seated.

Jack could hardly form a proper reply. With two men against him, he realized that he was in a bad fix.

"Why, I didn't know that you were here, Corrigan," he began. "I thought----"

Jack never finished the sentence. He heard a noise behind him, but before he could turn to see what it was, he received a cruel blow on the head, and then all became a dark, terrible blank.

CHAPTER VII.

INTO THE RIVER

Slowly and painfully, with a dull ache in his head, and an uncertain look in his

eyes, Jack returned to his senses. A thin stream of blood trickled down his neck, and putting up his hand he felt a large lump under the hair.

"It must have been Mosey who struck me," was his first thought as he gathered his scattered faculties together. "Well, thank God, he didn't kill me."

It was some time before he felt any desire to rise, and when he finally did so, he found himself weaker than he had anticipated.

"The coward!" was the young machinist's comment. "To strike me unawares. I knew he disliked me, but hasn't he wronged me enough already?"

Jack did not know--nor, indeed, could he have understood--the bitter hatred the Irishman bore him.

The only pride of Andy Mosey's life was his bull pup and his son Mike, and to have the young machinist occupying a position he thought his son should have, had always been more than this hot-tempered fellow was inclined to bear.

The place in which Jack found himself was totally dark, whether because it had no windows, or because it was night, he could not tell.

He groped around, and seeing a ray of light coming up from beneath, applied his eye to what proved to be a knot-hole in the floor.

He was surprised to find the river flowing directly below, and knew at once that he was in the lowest part of the old mill, opposite the ancient wheel.

"They must have carried me here," he said to himself. "I wonder how long ago?"

He felt his way along the walls, and at last reached the door. He was on the point of lifting the latch, when it was thrown open, and by the the rays of a lantern that at first dazzled him, he saw himself confronted by Dennis Corrigan and Andy Mosey.

"So ye'v cum to yer sinses at last, have ye?" was Mosey's greeting, as he set down the lantern. "Ye wint down moighty easy, so ye did."

"I'd like to know what right you have to treat me in this shameful manner," demanded Jack, indignantly.

"Never moind," returned the Irishman; "it will teach ye a lesson not to tell lying stories about me."

"I haven't said anything but what I believe to be true," replied Jack, pointedly.

"Sure, now, is that raly so? Well, ye can suffer for thinking wrong," continued Mosey. "Oi niver----"

"Oh, stop your everlasting jaw!" broke in Corrigan, who was more practical in his way than his brother-in-law. "Never mind what you've done, and what you haven't done. The question is, what are we to do with the boy, now he's here?"

The Irishman scratched his head.

"It won't do to let him go," he said.

"Suppose we search his pockets," suggested Corrigan.

Jack uttered an exclamation.

"What do you mean?" he demanded; "you wouldn't dare?"

Corrigan laughed. The young machinist did not yet know that this man was at heart a thorough villain.

"Wait and see," he remarked, coolly. "Put your back to the door, Andy, and don't let him escape."

Corrigan was a heavily built and powerful man, and in his present condition Jack knew that he was no match for such an opponent.

"What do you want?" asked the young machinist.

"Want to see what you have with you. Come, show up."

Jack's head still ached from the rough treatment it had received. He did not wish to court another such blow, and so did as demanded.

A knife, ten cents, the five-dollar bill farmer Farrell had given him, and a copy of his agreement with Mr. Benton were all the articles of value that he carried.

"Here's something for you, Andy," observed Corrigan, tossing over the ten-cent piece. "The price of a drink."

Corrigan quietly slipped the five-dollar bill into his own clothes. Then opening the agreement, he held it near the lantern and read it carefully. It seemed to interest him greatly, and muttering something to himself, he shoved it into the inside pocket of his coat.

"Do you intend to rob me outright?" exclaimed Jack, whose blood boiled at such treatment.

"If that's what you call it, I suppose we do," was Corrigan's reply.

The young machinist was now becoming more used to the situation, and he determined to submit no longer. He noticed that Mosey had unconsciously moved to one side, and watching his chance, he sprang for the door.

But Corrigan was too quick for him, and with a reach of his long arm he caught the young machinist by the collar, and held him until Mosey had again reached the door.

Jack's grit was up and he wrestled with all his strength. He caught his antagonist by the waist, and literally threw him to the floor.

"Hit him. Andy, hit him!" screamed Corrigan, trying to regain his feet.

Mosey approached Jack with the same stick he had used in the first encounter. The young machinist caught the blow upon the left arm, and retaliated by landing one square from the shoulder on the Irishman's nasal organ. He did not believe in pugilism, but knew something of the art of self-defense; and used his knowledge to good advantage.

He followed up the first blow by another, and had just gained the door for the second time, when Corrigan, with a vile exclamation, seized the heavy brass

lantern, and swinging it over his head, brought it down with all force upon Jack's neck.

The blow half stunned the young machinist, and before he could recover he was on his back, with Corrigan on top of him.

"Phat shall we do?" asked Mosey in bewilderment. Jack's unexpected attack had surprised and dismayed him.

"Get that rope upstairs," gasped Corrigan, who was well-nigh winded; "we'll bind him so tight that he won't give us any more trouble."

The Irishman disappeared for a few moments.

When he returned he held a stout cord in his hand, with which the two bound the young machinist securely, hands and feet.

"We'll leave him here for the present," said Corrigan, when they had finished their work. "Come on," and taking up the lantern, which in spite of its rough usage still remained lit, he led the way up stairs followed by Mosey.

"Well, I'm in a pretty fix, and no mistake," was Jack's mental decision when alone. "So far, my exertions to gain freedom haven't amounted to anything. But if they think that I'm going to give up already, they are mistaken."

He tugged at the cords, and by a strong effort managed, though not without painful squeezing, to pull his feet free.

His hands, however, were placed altogether too closely to allow of a similar proceeding, and he endeavored to find some means of cutting the fastening.

He remembered that the latch of the door was a rusty one, and rough on its lower side. Walking over to this, he began to rub the cord along the edge in the hope of severing it, but the improvised saw--if it might be called such--was not a handy tool, and half an hour passed before he made any material progress.

"It's mighty slow work," he said to himself: "but it's bound to wear away sooner or later."

Presently a heavy step sounded outside on the stairs, and a moment later Andy Mosey pitched into the room.

He was in a sad state of intoxication, and his face was red with anger.

"Been tellin' foine sthories about me!" he exclaimed. "Saying I sthole yer match-box an' set foire to old Gray's house! Oi'll fix ye!"

[image]

"BEEN TELLIN' FOINE STHORIES ABOUT ME!" HE EXCLAIMED. "SAYIN' I STHOLE YER MATCH-BOX AN' SET FOIRE TO OLD GRAY'S HOUSE! OI'LL FIX YE!"

He held a heavy stick in his hand, and as he spoke he brought it down with

full force on Jack's head. The young machinist went down like a shot.

"Tellin' loies about me!" continued Mosey, as he dragged the half senseless body to the water's edge.

"Help! Help!" cried Jack, in a feeble voice.

But his cries were of no avail, and the next instant the young machinist was being swept by the rushing tide down the stream, to the roaring falls below.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOMETHING ABOUT THE MODEL

Deb grew anxious when seven o'clock came and Jack did not put in an appearance. Under ordinary circumstances, she would not have minded it, but the events of the past two days combined to make her worry more than usual. She sat by the window, watching the stream of people returning from work, and then, when it was half after the hour, put on her hat and descended to the street below.

She walked slowly in the direction of the Redrock road, in hope of meeting her brother. At the end of three blocks, she came face to face with Mont Gray, who had just been finishing up some accounts at the tool works.

"Where are you going, may I ask?" he said, with a smile.

"To meet Jack," replied Deb. "He ought to be home by this time."

"Perhaps the work took longer than he expected," observed the young man. "You know he hates to leave a job until it's done."

"Oh, I know that. But I wish he would come, anyway; I can't bear to have him away now."

"Depend upon it, he can take good care of himself," added Mont. "Come, shall I walk home with you?"

"I suppose I might as well go," returned the girl, slowly, and turned back. "Oh, I'm so awfully nervous," she added.

"Your troubles have been too much for you," he answered, kindly. "They would have been for almost any one."

Though Mont's capital was, as we know, rather limited, he was anxious to help Deb and Jack all he could. Yet he hardly knew how to broach the subject.

"Did you--did Mr. Hammerby call again?" he asked, hesitatingly.

"Yes, and gave us a three days' notice to quit," replied the girl. "He----"

"He shall not put you out!" exclaimed the young man, vehemently. "It's an

outrage! It's bad enough for my uncle to believe your brother guilty, but to put you out----"

"But we are not going," continued Deb.

"I don't blame you. If I can help you----?" he began.

"No, you don't understand," returned Deb, quickly. "It's real good of you to offer help, but we don't need it," and she told him of the money Mr. Benton was to pay over on the following morning.

"I'm glad to hear you're going to get some cash out of that man," remarked Mont. "Although even so, he made a sharp bargain with Jack."

A few minutes later they reached the house.

"Will you come up?" asked Deb.

"I haven't time," he replied. "I've got to do an errand for my uncle. Maybe afterward, if I have a chance I'll take a look for Jack, and come up with him."

"Oh, I wish you would," she returned, "I know it's dreadfully silly for me to be so easily worried, but I can't help it."

"Oh, it's all right, I suppose. If I was in his place maybe I'd like to be worried about, too," and away went Mont, whistling quite a merry air.

The young girl entered the kitchen and lit the lamp. It was now half-past eight, and as the people of the neighborhood were hard workers. who retired early, the streets were comparatively quiet.

She left the supper dishes upon the table, and putting some extra coal into the stove, set the tea and other things so that they might keep warm.

It was a dreary evening for her. She did not care much to read--actual life interested her far more than books--and now all her thoughts were centered on Jack.

"It's a pretty long walk from that farmer's place," she kept saying to herself. "But he will come soon, oh, he must come soon."

Her reflections were broken by hearing an unknown step upon the stairs, followed by a sharp rap at the door.

Hardly knowing whom to expect at this hour of the night, she bade the person enter.

The newcomer was Dennis Corrigan!

Deb did not know the man. She had seen him on the streets, but though he was fairly well dressed, she was not taken by his general appearance.

"Does Jack Willington live here?" asked Corrigan, with a hasty glance around the kitchen, to see who might be present.

"Yes, sir," replied Deb, and then realizing that the man might have news for her, she continued quickly: "Did he send you?"

"Yes, Miss. He said I was to get a model that he had here."

This assertion surprised the girl. What in the world could Jack want with

his model this time of night?

"Where is my brother?" she asked.

Corrigan was not prepared to answer this question.

"He is--down the street," he stammered.

"Where?"

"Why--down in McGlory's saloon."

This reply was a fatal blunder for Corrigan, who by a little scheme of his own, had proposed to get the model into his possession without any difficulty.

"In McGlory's saloon!" repeated Deb, in amazement. "Why, Jack doesn't drink."

"Oh, yes, he does--once in a while," replied Corrigan, glibly.

"You're mistaken!" returned Deb, sharply. "What does he want the model for?"

She was growing a trifle suspicious. The article in question was valuable, and just now doubly so.

"I don't know what he's going to do with it. Got it handy?"

Involuntarily Deb glanced over to where the model stood covered with a cloth. She regretted the action an instant after, for Corrigan's eyes watched her closely.

"How far is that saloon from here?" she asked.

"Only a few blocks."

"Queer he didn't come for it himself."

"He was too busy. He asked me to go for him, and sent this paper as an order. He said you'd know all about it," replied Corrigan, and he handed out the agreement he had stolen from Jack.

Deb recognized the paper at once. Jack must certainly have given it to the man, and yet, for a reason she could not explain, she felt that all was not right.

One thing she remembered; her brother had repeatedly cautioned her not to let outsiders examine the model under any plea. To place it, therefore, in a stranger's hands seemed a risk she did not care to assume.

"What's the matter?" asked Corrigan, as Deb still hesitated. "Ain't it all right?"

He was growing uneasy, fearful of being interrupted just at the moment when the prize was almost within his grasp.

"I would rather have my brother come for it himself," said the girl finally.

"He can't come; he's too busy," persisted the intruder.

"It wouldn't take long to get it if he is only a few blocks away."

"Yes, but he doesn't want to leave. He has a chance of selling it to a man for big money, and he's afraid the man may back out if he leaves him."

Deb was sorely perplexed. The man might be speaking the truth, in which

case she did not for the world wish Jack to lose the chance of striking a bargain.

"So I'll take it right along at once," continued Corrigan, stepping over to where the model stood.

But, at this instant, a bright idea came into the girl's head. She knew that she could trust Mr. Snitzer, or one of his sons, and was sure that any one of them would do her a favor willingly.

"You need not take so much trouble," she exclaimed, stepping between the man and the model. "Just leave the address of the place, and I will send it up at once."

This was a staggerer for Corrigan, and he knew not how to answer.

"No, I'll take it myself," he replied, roughly.

His words sent a dreadful chill to Deb's heart. In an instant she realized the man's true object, and her own helpless condition.

"What do you mean?" she cried in terror.

"I mean that if you won't give me the model I'll take it."

The words had hardly been uttered before Deb gave a terrible scream.

"Stop your noise!" hissed Corrigan, jumping to her side, and clapping his hand over her mouth.

The girl struggled to escape, but she was as a feather in this powerful fellow's arms, and half fainting, she felt herself borne into the next room, and the door locked upon her.

Then she heard Corrigan pick up the model, and hurry down the stairs and out of the house.

CHAPTER IX.

MR. BENTON MAKES TROUBLE

"Help! Help!"

"Vas is dot?" exclaimed Mrs. Snitzer, who had been dozing in the rocking chair awaiting her son's return.

"Sounds like some von vas in troubles," replied her husband, from the sofa.

Both sprang to their feet and hurried to the door.

Mrs. Snitzer had scarcely opened it when a man rushed past her and out of the front hall-way.

"Help! Help!"

"It vas Deb, for sure!" cried the German woman, and she ascended the stairs as fast as her portly form would permit, closely followed by her husband.

It took but a moment to pass through the kitchen and unlock the door of the adjoining chamber. They found Deb half dead from fright, and vainly endeavoring to escape.

"Oh, Mrs. Snitzer, a man has just stolen Jack's model!" gasped the poor girl. "He ran down stairs."

"Ve saw him," put in Mr. Snitzer. "I go me after him," he continued, hurrying off as rapidly as his legs would move.

"Oh, what will Jack say when he hears that it's gone!" moaned Deb.

"Tell me apout it," said the kindly German woman.

She took the excited girl in her arms, and stroking the soft, curly hair, tried to calm Deb as best she could.

In a nervous voice the girl told her story. She was on the verge of hysterics, and it was only Mrs. Snitzer's quick sense of comprehension that enabled her fully to understand the situation.

In about ten minutes Mr. Snitzer returned. The look upon his face told plainly that he had failed in the pursuit.

"It vas no use," he said, "I couldn't see nodding of him;" and he dropped into a chair exhausted.

Deb's grief was hard to witness. It was bad enough to have Jack away, but to have some one steal his precious model, the idea of his life, was too dreadful to contemplate.

"I shall never get over it," she sobbed; "I ought to have been more careful!"

Mrs. Snitzer let her cry it out. Experience had taught her that it would do no good to check the flow of tears. She motioned her husband to leave, while she herself made preparations to stay all night.

As the hours wore on Deb for a while forgot the model in her anxiety concerning Jack's welfare. As long as she could remember, her brother had never remained away over night, and whether by premonition or otherwise, she was positive something dreadful had happened.

With the first break of day she was on the watch. She prepared no breakfast, nor did she touch that which the German woman generously offered.

Deb wandered up and down the street for two hours.

Still no Jack.

She visited the neighbors. Had this one seen him? No. Perhaps that one had? Not since yesterday morning.

Suddenly she grew very pale, and with faltering steps approached the jail.

The doorkeeper greeted her with evident surprise.

"What brings you here this morning?" he asked.

"My brother has been missing since last night," replied Deb, in a choking voice, "and I thought that perhaps you had--had locked him up again!"

"Why, no. Haven't seen him since he left," replied the man. "Missing, eh!" He gave a low whistle, "Hope he hasn't jumped his bail."

"What do you mean?"

"Run away to escape trial."

"Jack wouldn't do that."

"Can't tell. Fellows do unexpected things sometimes. So you don't know where he's gone?"

"No."

The doorkeeper reflected for a moment.

"Didn't he accuse somebody else of being the cause of the fire?" he asked.

"Yes, sir; he was almost certain it was done by a man named Mosey."

"And I believe this Mosey couldn't be found?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then maybe your brother has a clue, and is on the man's track."

This put the affair in a new light.

"Perhaps you are right," said Deb, slowly.

"Guess I am. Hope so, anyway."

"Thank you."

The girl breathed more freely when she got to the street. There was a good deal of consolation in what the doorkeeper had said.

She walked over toward the tool works, and saw Mont at one of the windows. A second later the young man came out with a packet of letters.

"I've just finished what remained of the work," he said. "Now I won't have hardly anything to do until we start up again."

He was surprised to learn that Jack had not yet put in his appearance.

"The doorkeeper must be right," he observed reflectively. "Who it was though, that stole the model, I can't imagine. Tell you what I'll do. I'll post these letters, and then walk out to that farmer's place and find out what I can."

When Deb returned home she found a man and a boy in the hall, waiting for her.

"Are you Miss Willington?" asked the man, politely.

"Yes, sir."

"Then I'm sorry, but unless you are able to pay the rent that is due, I have orders to put you out of the house."

Deb shrunk back in horror.

"Out of the house?" she repeated!

"Yes, ma'am, Mr. Hammerby served you with a three days' notice to quit, I believe?"

"He did--two days ago."

"Three days----"

"No, only two."

"Will you please let me see the paper?"

"He dated it a day back," explained Deb.

The man shrugged his shoulders.

"If he did, you should have complained of it at the time. I am a constable, and we people always go by the paper. I'm sorry to disturb you."

"Where will you--you put us?" faltered the girl, with a white face.

"Set your goods in the street," was the matter-of-fact reply. The constable was old in the service, and many cruel scenes had hardened his heart.

"Into the street!" wailed the poor girl.

"That's what I said, unless, of course, you can raise the eight dollars that's due."

"I haven't it now. But my brother expected to get fifty dollars from a man for an interest in an invention of his."

"When?"

"To-day. But my brother is away."

"Can't you get it?"

"Perhaps I can," replied Deb, hesitatingly. "I'll try, anyway. Will you wait till I come back?"

"Certainly," replied the constable, and he took a chair, and began to read the morning paper that he had brought with him.

While Deb was getting ready for her urgent errand, there was a noise outside, and Mr. Benton himself appeared.

"Where is your brother?" he demanded, without any preliminary salutation.

"I don't know, sir," replied the girl, her breath almost taken away by the suddenness of the question.

"They told me he was missing," continued the speculator. "I suppose that you have the model safe?"

"No, sir. It was stolen last evening."

Deb began to cry again. Mr. Benton caught her arm roughly.

"I don't believe a word you say!" he exclaimed, in harsh tones. "It's only a plot to do me out of my rights! But it won't work, understand that, it won't work.

Either you must produce the model, or else I'll have you arrested for fraud!"

CHAPTER X.

DRIVEN FROM HOME

Deb looked at Mr. Benton in horror. It was only after several seconds that she fully realized the terrible accusation which he had brought against her.

"A plot!" she faltered. "What do you mean?"

"Only this," continued Mr. Benton, "your brother has run away to escape trial, and he has taken the model with him. You have helped him to do this. But it won't work. I pay my way, and a bargain's a bargain. If I have to pay the thousand dollars, I'll have the model or I'll know the reason why."

"But how do you know Jack has run away?"

"If he hasn't, where is he?"

"He went to a job in the country yesterday morning and hasn't returned yet."

"And you expect me to believe that story?" sneered the speculator.

"It's the truth," replied Deb, bursting into tears. "I'm sure Jack will come back. The model was stolen by a man who said my brother had sent him for it."

"And are you positive that your brother did not send him for it?"

"Almost, sir, because the man ran away with it when I promised to send it by some one else."

"Humph! Well, we'll see; I'll let the matter rest until to-morrow, and then we'll have a settlement."

With these words Mr. Benton pulled his hat more tightly than usual over his small, round head, and tripped down the stairs and out of the building.

Deb's heart sank like a clod. Her last hope was gone. She had counted on getting help from the speculator, and the result had been directly the opposite.

"Rec'on you won't get anything out of him," was the constable's grim comment. He had listened in silence to the brief interview, and now arose to continue his disagreeable but necessary duty.

"Isn't there any way at all of having this thing stopped?" asked the girl, bitterly.

"No; unless you get the money," was the man's reply, and pulling off his coat, he took up a couple of chairs, and marched down stairs.

Deb jumped up and followed him. Her heart beat wildly, and something in her throat nearly choked her. What could she do? Her thoughts ran to Mrs. Snitzer. She knew the kind German woman needed money as much as any of the tool works people did, but perhaps she could give some help, or offer some advice.

She flew to the door of her neighbor's apartments, and knocked eagerly. No answer came, and then she knocked more loudly than ever.

Suddenly she remembered that Mrs. Snitzer had signified her intention of taking her whole family to her brother's farm for a few days, and possibly until the end of the shut-down.

"It's no use, they're all gone!" she sighed. "There is no help to be had!"

Meanwhile the constable worked rapidly. In his time he had been in situations where the neighbors had interfered with him, and he wished to get away as soon as possible.

Soon there was quite a respectable stock of furniture and other household effects piled upon the sidewalk. Deb packed up the smaller stuff as fast as she could--the china and crockery in baskets, and the clothing and linen in the two old family trunks. Truth to admit, the constable did not hurry her a bit more than he could help.

Presently Deb went below to see that no one should walk away with some of their belongings. Her eyes were red and swollen, and a more wretched girl could not have been found in all Corney.

As she sat down on one of the upturned wash tubs she wondered what she was to do. She had no neighbors, and with the exception of the Snitzers they were all strangers to her--they on their part deeming her "stuck up," and perhaps rejoicing to see her placed in her present humiliating position.

The wild hope of Jack's return came constantly to her mind, and twice she ran down to the corner vainly straining her eyes to catch sight of his well-known form.

"If I had only accepted Mont's aid," she thought, "I wonder where I could find him?"

Presently the constable brought down the very last of the goods, and locking up the rooms, went away.

"Why, Deb, I declare, I didn't know you were going to move. You didn't say anything of it last Sunday. How lucky I came before you were gone! or, perhaps, how unlucky to come when you are all upside down. Never mind, go right ahead, and don't pay any attention to me. It's an awful job, isn't it? I haven't experienced moving in ten years, but I remember well that I didn't get straightened out for two months, and then it took twice that long to get accustomed to the new place. Where did you say you were moving to?"

And having thus delivered herself in one breath, the speaker, a middle-aged

lady, who wore blue glasses, and was slightly deaf, took Deb's hand in a quick, nervous grasp, and peered into the care-worn face.

"Oh, Miss Parks, we are not moving at all!" cried out the girl, laying her head on her Sunday-school teacher's shoulder.

"Glad I called?" queried Miss Parks, misunderstanding her. "Well, now, seeing things as they are, I didn't expect it. But, maybe I can help you. I'm not overdressed, so just tell me what to do, and I'll go right to work. Hasn't the truck-man come yet?"

"We--are--not--moving," repeated Deb, putting her mouth close to Miss Parks's ear.

"No? Why--why--then something dreadful has happened, all your furniture out here on the sidewalk, with the dust a-blowing on 'em. What is it--fire? That's a dreadful thing. Even if things are not burned up, the smoke gets in 'em, and you can't get it out."

"It isn't fire," returned the unhappy girl, "it's because we can't pay the rent."

"Oh, dear!" Miss Parks was all sympathy at once. "I thought your brother was doing pretty well now," she added.

"So he was. But the tool works have shut down, and we can't get a cent from the bank."

The elderly maiden caught at the words.

"The bank! Isn't it awful. They wouldn't give me mine, yesterday, and I wanted it the worst way, too. But tell me about your trouble."

In a few words, spoken as plainly as possible, Deb poured her tale into the lady's ear.

"I heard about your brother being arrested for the fire," remarked Miss Parks. "But I didn't believe it. Mr. Long says Jack is such a good fellow, and such an excellent scholar."

"I'm glad you think so," burst out the girl. "Oh, Miss Parks, if people only knew Jack as well as I do, they wouldn't say such horrid things about him."

"Well, dear, we all have our trials, and must ask Him to help us bear them," replied the elderly maiden, with sincere piety. "But about the rent. How much is it?"

"Six dollars."

"Not much, truly. But it's more than I have, or I'd pay it in a minute. Have you any money at all?"

"Not over three dollars."

Miss Parks drew out her pocketbook, and examined the contents.

"Just a dollar," she exclaimed. "I declare we are both poor, with money in the bank, too." She paused a moment in deep thought. "I'll tell you what you might do."

"What?" asked Deb, eagerly.

"Move your things down to my house. I'll let you have the back bedroom and attic, and when you're settled we'll see what is to be done. Jack will be back before a great while, I'm certain."

Miss Parks was entirely alone in the world. The house that she occupied was her own, left her by an invalid uncle, whom she had nursed constantly during the last four years of his life. She was a dress-maker, and a lady's companion, and earned a fair living--a goodly portion of which found its way to charity and the church--for she was a devout Christian, and an earnest worker in the cause.

"Oh, thank you!" cried Deb, a heavy weight taken from her mind. "But won't it be inconvenient for you?"

"Not a bit. In fact I think I'll enjoy company."

"Then I'll accept your offer," continued the girl, "And I think it is real good of you to let me come."

Miss Parks bent down and kissed the tired cheeks.

"You're a good girl, Deb," she said. "You don't deserve such a trial as this."

A little later a truckman was engaged who speedily transferred the household goods to Deb's new home.

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE RIVER ROAD

Mont Gray hastened to the Corney postoffice with all possible speed. For his own sake, as well as for Deb's he wished to dispatch his business as quickly as possible, so as to devote the remainder of the day to hunting up Jack.

He was afraid that something out of the ordinary had befallen his friend. He had not wished to add to Deb's already deep anxiety, but he knew Jack too well to imagine that the young machinist would willfully keep his sister in ignorance of his whereabouts.

This feeling upon the young man's part might not have been so strong had all other surroundings been more tranquil. But since the shut-down at the tool works the air had been filled with murmurs of dissatisfaction--augmented largely by the suspension of the bank, and everywhere there prevailed a vague feeling that something was about to happen.

One thing was certain. Not a single one of his employes were satisfied with

Mr. Felix Gray's management, and there were plenty of hot-headed men who wished him joy over his burnt mansion.

It did not take Mont long to post the letters, and then he struck out at once for the Farrell place.

It was a glorious morning, bright and clear, and when he reached the Redrock road he found the birds singing as merrily as could be.

In spite of the unpleasant things that had happened, Mont felt wonderfully light-hearted, the secret of which was that he was doing something for Deb--a service which he knew she would appreciate, and one which, therefore, he was more than willing to do.

As the young man walked along the river bank whistling cheerily to himself he espied a man coming toward him.

A moment later he recognized the individual as Andy Mosey.

"Wonder what he is doing out here," said Mont to himself. "Perhaps the prison keeper was right, and Jack is on his track--may be watching his chance to get evidence to convict him." When the discovery took place Mont was at a spot where the road ran close to the bank, and here he waited for the Irishman to come up.

As Mosey approached, it was easy to see that he had been drinking heavily. In truth it was but the continuance of his potations of the previous day.

"He had better take care, or he'll go over the bank, sure," was the young man's mental observation, as he watched the reeling form.

As Mosey drew nearer Mont noticed that his eyes were deeply sunken, and that despite the drink, his face looked pale and haggard.

"Possibly he is worried over his wrongdoings," thought Mont, hitting more truth than he imagined. "It's a pity such a strong fellow can't keep from liquor."

The Irishman shuffled directly toward Mont, without apparently noticing him.

"Hello," exclaimed the young man, sharply. "Where bound?"

The Irishman started up in surprise.

"Where you--hic--goin'?" he asked.

"I'm looking for Jack Willington. Have you seen him?"

Mosey gave a shudder. The remembrance of that awful scene in the old mill still hung in his mind.

"No--hic--no," he answered hastily. "Oi haven't see the b'y for two days," and he gave a lurch outward.

"Take care!" exclaimed Mont. "If you tumble over that bank you'll never get out again."

The Irishman drew as far away as possible from the water.

"You're roight, Mont, me b'y," he mumbled. "It's sure death, and no--hic--

foolin'."

"So you're certain that you haven't seen Jack?" continued Mont. "He has been out here I know."

The effect of his last words was a truly astonishing one. With a cry of drunken rage, Mosey sprang toward him, his eyes blazing with fury.

"Ye can't come it over--hic--me!" he shouted. "Ye think ye're schmart, but yo're left this--hic--toime."

"What do you mean?" ejaculated Mont.

The extraordinary change in the Irishman's manner nearly dumbfounded him.

"Ye know well enough."

"Then you have seen him?" exclaimed the young man. "Oh, I see. He knows a thing or two about you, and----"

"He don't know--hic--nothin',--now," hiccoughed the Irishman. The liquor had muddled his brain.

"What!" gasped Mont, with a sudden sense of horror. "You--you----" he began.

He was standing with his heels against a small rock that overhung the bank.

"Ye can foind out fer--hic--yerself!" snarled Mosey, and with a quick spring he gave the young man a push that sent him spinning over backward. Mont tried to catch hold of the rock, but the smooth surface slipped from under his hands. He grasped the small bushes--they came out by the roots. He felt himself going down--down;--the glint of the sunshine upon the water sparkled in his face and then?

[image]

WITH A QUICK SPRING HE GAVE THE YOUNG MAN A PUSH THAT SENT HIM SPINNING OVER BACKWARD.

Mosey got down flat on the rocks and crawling to the edge, peered over the bank. He saw Mont's hat rise to the surface, and float swiftly along with the bounding stream.

"He's gone!" he muttered, hoarsely, after waiting for further signs of his victim. "Gone to the bottom!"

He crawled back to the middle of the road, and arose to his feet.

The awful occurrence had for the time sobered him, and he moved forward without a stagger.

"Bad worruk Oi'm doin'!" he muttered to himself. "Phat will Dennis say?"

The thought of his brother-in-law's possible condemnation of his actions made him shiver. He turned and slowly retraced his steps from whence he had come. He had not quite reached the spot when Corrigan's voice sounded in his ear.

"Where have you been?" he demanded.

"Oi thought Oi'd go to Corney, but Oi changed me moind," was Mosey's reply.

"Good thing you did. They want you up there."

"Phat for?"

Mosey had stopped at the door, and now looked at his brother-in-law sharply.

"Oh, for setting fire to Gray's house," said Corrigan, with a laugh.

"Oh, Oi thought----" the Irishman suddenly checked himself. "Say, Oi didn't see ye on the road," he continued.

"I came up by the back way," replied Corrigan.

"Phy?"

Corrigan made no reply. To tell the truth, he did not wish Mosey to know that he had stolen Jack's model, and that precious article was now safely hidden in the loft of the mill.

"Phy don't ye answer me question?" continued Andy Mosey.

"Oh, I thought I'd try the other way for a change," said Corrigan, as lightly as possible. "How is the young fellow?" he continued, changing the subject.

"He's--he's gone," faltered Mosey. "He--he had a mishap, and fell into the wather."

"Drowned?"

"Yes."

Corrigan gave a whistle of surprise. He was on the point of asking the particulars, but suddenly changed his mind.

"Well, I'm glad he's out of the way," he declared.

Mosey walked into the mill, and sat down on a bench, the picture of fear and misery. Corrigan did not pay any further attention to him, but went upstairs and examined the model he had stolen.

"It is a beautiful piece of work!" was his mental comment, "and if I only work it right I'll make a neat stake out of it!" he added as he hid it away again.

CHAPTER XII.

JACK'S DANGEROUS POSITION

Meanwhile how had Jack fared?

His last cry for help had been cut short by his plunge into the river. With his hands still bound tightly behind him, he felt himself sink many feet, and then a few seconds later he regained the surface, and shook the water from his face. He found that the swiftly flowing tide had carried him several rods from the old mill, and well out toward mid-stream.

"I'm surely lost!" he said to himself with a shudder. "The falls are not more than a quarter of a mile below, and when I reach there----"

A shiver finished the sentence. In time past he had heard of several persons being carried over, and not one had lived to tell the story. What hope was there then for him?

He remembered that half way to the falls the stream narrowed considerably where the tide rushed with a roar that was deafening, and there were several huge rocks. Perhaps, if he could gain one of these, when morning came he might devise some means of escape.

He tried his best to slip off the cord from his wrists, which was the same cord that had been fastened to his feet, and which now dragged a considerable distance behind him. But the hemp was water soaked, and cut into his flesh until it bled.

On and on he was carried. It seemed that every instant the speed increased. It was useless to cry out--no one was near, even if indeed, his voice should reach the shore. His mind was filled with countless anxious thoughts. What would his friends think of his absence? What would Mont say? What would Deb do if he was lost?

Thinking of his dear sister was more painful than aught else, and he uttered a sincere prayer that his life might be spared, for her sake, if not for his own.

Presently, through the gloom came the noise of the water as it washed over and around the rocks below.

He lifted his head as high as possible, and strained his eyes to get a view of the situation, but water and foam were alone in sight.

Nearer and nearer he was now drawing. The water bubbled all around. Then like a flash a black object loomed to the right.

He struggled with all his power to gain it. Kicking and plunging, his side struck a rock.

He tried to grasp it, but it slipped. Another and still another passed. The water surged on all sides.

Suddenly his feet touched bottom. He threw himself with all his force

against the current.

"Now or never!" were his thoughts. "For home and Deb!"

He flung his body to one side where a sharp rock stuck out of the water but a few inches, and, half turning, he threw his arm partly over it.

His feet were swept from under him, and as the cord upon his wrists still refused to part, his shoulder was nearly dislocated by the strain that was thus brought to bear.

Beside the sharp rock was another, and drawing a long breath, he gradually worked his way until he lay flat upon its surface.

This new resting place was not more than seven feet in length by three in width, yet to Jack it seemed a perfect island, so much more preferable was it to the cold water of the stream.

The young machinist lay quiet for a long time.

He was utterly exhausted, and it was no easy task to recover the wind that had been knocked out of him.

After a while, he turned over and sat up. He was afraid to try standing, fearful of losing his footing.

In the semi-darkness he calculated that the rocks leading to either shore were fully fifteen or twenty feet away--a distance which, in such a place as this, was as bad as a mile, so far as reaching them was concerned.

"If it was only a little lighter I might throw out the rope and catch fast somewhere," he said to himself. "As it is, I suppose I'll have to wait till morning."

But waiting was far from agreeable. Had he been sure of eventually escaping, it would have been different, but the doubt of this rendered his mind extremely uneasy.

Nearly an hour passed. It grew darker, and one by one the stars came out.

Ceaselessly the water tumbled and roared, as if it knew not the meaning of rest.

As we know, he had had but little sleep the night before, and now he was fagged out. Several times his eyes closed and his head nodded, but he always came to his senses.

"It will never do to go to sleep here?" he exclaimed. "Guess I'll try shouting. It will keep me awake, if nothing else."

He used his lungs to their full capacity, yet his voice was no stronger than the bleating of a lamb in a hurricane.

"No one will ever hear me," was his dismal comment, and then he stopped.

Another hour slowly passed.

To Jack it seemed like an age. He was getting benumbed by the cold water, and his limbs were stiff and sore. How long would it last? How long could it last?

Another hour!

It must surely be morning soon--he had been there certainly a full night already. Why didn't it grow light?

His eyes closed for a moment--more from exhaustion than sleep--and then they closed again.

Why, what was this?

Here he was safe at home! There was the supper table waiting, and Deb, in her neat, white apron, pouring out the tea! Now they sat down together and began to eat, when, hold up--there was a fire somewhere. Was it in their home? Yes, it must be for the fireman was at the window with a hose--and it was Mr. Gray! The water struck Jack in the ear.

"Help! help! I----"

The young machinist awoke in horror. He had slipped from the rock, and was again being madly whirled down the stream!

Oh! the agony of that moment! Why had he allowed himself to fall asleep?

Nothing but certain death now stared him in the face!

In the dim dawn he looked ahead and saw the line of white that marked the last of the breakwater above the awful descent.

"I'm gone, sure!" he sighed. "Good-by to home and Deb!"

On he swept with ever-increasing speed. The lofty brink was only a hundred feet away--now it was seventy-five--now fifty!

With a terrible cry he flung himself back, as if to ward off that which was inevitable.

Stop--what was this? The cord that was dragging behind him tightened; it grew tighter still--it stopped his progress!

"If it only holds!" was his one thought.

He waited, and looked back to see how the hemp had become fastened, but the surface of the water was without a break.

It held, and as it gradually tightened more and more, there slowly arose to the top, the limb of a huge tree that had probably been carried down the stream by the spring freshet.

The knot at the end of the rope had dragged itself fast in a notch between two of the smaller branches, and before it could loose itself, Jack caught the larger branch, and locked his feet tightly around it.

His weight threw the tree still more on its side, and this placed him high and dry several feet above the surface, and about a rod above the falls!

The position was a terrifying one. It made him dizzy to look at the boiling water as it fell, and the vortex below was awful to contemplate.

"I suppose this tree won't stick fast forever," he thought, "and even if it does, how can I ever hope to reach shore from here?"

How long he remained in this trying position, with life on one side, and

death on the other, Jack never knew. He clung fast as never before, and to secure himself still further, tied the rope fast to the tree and to his own body.

It was now broad daylight. Surely some one passing on either shore would see and assist him.

But hour after hour dragged along, and no one came. It was getting toward noon, and the sun sent a glare all over the sparkling water.

What was this dark object that was floating so rapidly toward him?

A man!

The young machinist uttered an exclamation. The body came within his reach, and leaning over, he stayed its progress.

[image]

THE BODY CAME WITHIN HIS REACH, AND LEANING OVER, HE STAYED ITS PROGRESS

The form was limp and motionless, the eyes closed.

Jack turned it over.

"Mont Gray!" he shrieked. "Oh, Mont, Mont, are you dead?"

CHAPTER XIII.

OVER THE FALLS

Jack was never so amazed in his life as when he discovered that the pale, senseless form that he had dragged upon the tree beside him was no less a person than his friend, Mont Gray. But at that moment, he did not stop to question how the young man had gotten into a position similar to his own. His one thought was whether or not his friend was alive.

He placed the body as comfortably as possible on the fork of the tree, and then watched eagerly for some sign of life.

There was a cut upon Mont's brow, and presently a few drops of blood oozed from the wound, and trickled down his cheek.

Jack took this as a good sign, and he was not mistaken, for a few seconds later the young man gave a deep sigh, and slowly opened his eyes.

"Where am I?" he asked, faintly.

"Here with me, Mont," replied the young machinist, bending over him. "Don't you know me?"

"Jack!" was the low response. "Oh, how my head hurts! Where are we?"

"On the river."

"We are?" Mont attempted to rise, but Jack pushed him back. "Oh, I remember now!" he continued, shuddering.

"Remember what?" asked the young machinist, eagerly.

"The push Mosey gave me over the bank. My head struck a rock, and I don't know what happened after that. Where did you say we are?"

"In the middle of the river, just above the falls."

"How in the world did we get here? Oh, I see! You came out to rescue me!"

"No, I didn't. Mosey pitched me from the old mill last night, and I've been in the water ever since. I saw your body floating along, and without knowing who it was, caught hold and landed you here."

"You've saved my life," exclaimed Mont, fervently. "I'll never forget that, Jack!"

"I don't know whether I've saved your life or not," returned the young machinist, seriously. "It depends on whether we can reach shore or not; we are close to the falls, and liable to go over at any minute."

Mont pulled himself to a sitting position.

"Better take care!" cried Jack, "or you'll fall off. I am tied fast, and you are not. Here, take this end of the rope and bind yourself."

"Never mind. I'm all right now," replied the young man, as he viewed the situation. "It is a tight scrape, and no mistake," he added. "Wonder how this tree is wedged fast? Must be between the rocks."

"Yes, and it won't hold fast forever," returned Jack.

"We must reach shore, if possible, without delay."

"Easier said than done. Now if we had a rope----"

"Will this do?"

"No; it isn't long enough. Hello! something's giving way already!"

At that instant the trunk of the tree quivered, and moved a foot or so nearer the falls.

"Hold fast for your life!" Jack called; "perhaps it has broken loose!"

He had hardly uttered the words before the tree snapped its fastenings and swept toward the falls.

"Give me your hand, Mont," continued Jack, in a loud voice, seeing that his friend could not secure a good hold.

But before the young man could comply the tree turned over, and both were immersed.

In another instant, the willow, for such it was, had reached the brink. Here

it hesitated for a moment, and then with a sharp sound it dove over the madly boiling mass into the maelstrom below!

The noise was terrific. Jack held on, closing his eyes, and forgetting everything.

He felt himself go down, down--and still further. The water rang in his ears, and many colors flickered in his mind's eye. The pressure from above was tremendous.

Ten seconds passed. He felt his senses leaving him. Mont's body bumped against him, and unconsciously he threw his own body partly around that of his friend.

Then all became a dim, dark uncertainty. The willow did not remain under the falls long. The rush of water soon forced it out into the stream below, and once there, it shot along, bearing upon its topmost branches two human bodies.

It drifted in mid-stream, gradually diminishing its speed, until an island stopped its further progress.

It struck upon a sandy shore, and the upper end swung gently around, catching fast in some overhanging bushes.

The bright sun shone down upon the scene as tranquilly as ever. Its warm rays apparently revived Jack, for, with a deep shudder--like one awakening from a horrible dream--the young machinist opened his eyes and endeavored to take in the situation.

He felt as if he had been pulled and beaten until not a spot was left in his body that did not ache. The rope was gone from his wrists, hands and face were cut, and his clothing was torn in a dozen places.

Yet he did not mind all this. He had a certain sense of security--a knowledge that he had passed through a great peril in safety--that more than outbalanced his present sufferings.

Suddenly he thought of Mont. He started up to discover his friend lying near, his face deadly white, and his head hanging over the branch like a lump of lead.

Jack saw that they were close to shore--where, he did not know nor care, and gathering all his remaining strength, he clasped Mont in his arms, and made a leap for solid ground.

He reached the shore, deposited his friend's body on the grass, and then, unable longer to stand, sank down beside the young man.

The moments dragged wearily along. Jack felt himself growing stronger, and by pure grit he arose and turned all his attention to Mont.

"Looks as if he was dead!" was the young machinist's awful thought. "I never saw a drowned man, but he is fearfully quiet. Yet, if there's a spark of life left in him, I'll fan it up if I kill myself doing it."

He knelt down, and taking off Mont's coat, unloosened his collar. Then he rolled him on his back, raising the lower part of the body as high as possible, which caused the water to run from Mont's mouth in a stream.

After this he moved his friend's arms backward and forward to induce respiration, and was rewarded presently by seeing the young man give a gulp and a gasp for breath.

"Thank heaven for that!" ejaculated Jack. "It's a good sign," and with strengthened hopes he continued his efforts.

It was fully half an hour before Mont came to himself and sat up. He, too, was bewildered at the situation.

"Where are we?" he asked, after a long silence, in which both sought to regain their strength.

"I think we are on Blackbird Island," replied Jack, slowly. "That is just below the falls, you know."

"Did we drift here?"

"I suppose so. I don't know any more than you. I came to my senses on the tree only a little while ago."

Mont rolled over on his back and drew a long breath.

"I'm tremendously tired," he explained. "Do you know anything of this place?"

"I have often heard of it, but was never here before. I wonder if anyone lives here?"

"Don't know. It looks rather wild."

"Tell you what we'll do," said Jack. "We'll rest here in the sun for a while and let our clothes dry, and then explore the place and see what means we can find of reaching the mainland."

Mont agreed, and making themselves as comfortable as possible, the two boys rested for over an hour, each in the meantime relating to the other his experience.

"Mosey is a bad egg," was Mont's conclusion; "I suppose he thinks that he has sent us both to our death," and then he told Jack about the stolen model.

The young machinist was much worried.

"It must have been Corrigan," he said, as he arose, and put on his coat. "I wonder what he expects to do with such booty?"

"Sell it if he can," replied the young man. "Hello!" he exclaimed, as he happened to glance up. "Here comes some one. A girl, I declare! What is she doing

in this wilderness?"

CHAPTER XIV.

MAX POOLER'S MEG.

The girl who approached was a tall, gaunt creature, certainly not over ten years of age, yet with a knowing look of worldly experience in her pinched face and furtive black eyes.

She was sparingly dressed in an ill-fitting calico gown of ancient pattern. Her feet were bare and on her head rested a dilapidated sunbonnet. She carried a large pail on one arm, and made her way to a gushing spring but a few feet away from where Jack and Mont were reclining.

She started back in surprise upon seeing the pair, and as they sprang to their feet she made a hasty move as if to retreat.

"Don't run away, please," called out Jack. "We won't hurt you."

Thus reassured, the overgrown child--for she was naught else--stopped short, shyly swinging the empty pail from one hand to the other.

"Who're you?" she asked abruptly, as the young machinist came up.

"I'm Jack Willington, and this is my friend, Mont Gray."

"How'd you come here?" was the second question, asked as abruptly as the first.

"We had the misfortune to be carried over the falls," replied Jack.

The girl tossed her pretty, but by no means clean nose, in the air.

"Them falls?" she asked, pointing her long, thin finger to the mighty volume of water up the river.

"Yes."

She gave a contemptuous snicker.

"You can't stuff no such stories down me!" she ejaculated. "Them falls! You couldn't live a minnit in 'em! Think I believe such lies?"

"It's the truth, whether you believe it or not," put in Mont, "We were on that tree"--he pointed it out--"and that saved us. See, our clothes are still wet."

The girl was silent, more convinced by their genteel appearance, than by what was said, that she was being told the truth.

"What is your name?" asked Jack, curiously. He had never met such a unique character before.

"Meg," was the laconic reply.

"Meg? Meg what?"

"No, not Meg what; only Meg."

"But what is your other name?"

"Hain't got none."

"Oh, but you must have," put in Mont. He, too, was becoming interested.

"Never did--leastwise, never knowed it, anyway," and Meg grew sober for a moment.

"Do you live here?" asked Jack.

"Yep."

"Alone?"

"Nope. I live with Mr. Pooler."

"Who is he?"

The girl eyed the young machinist in surprise.

"Why, I thought everybody knew him," she said. "He's the man who owns this island."

"What, the whole of it?" exclaimed Mont, in astonishment.

"Yep."

"And you live here with him?" continued Jack.

"Yep. Have always."

"Any one else here besides you and him?"

"Not now. His wife used to, but she died last winter."

"I suppose you keep house for him?"

"Yep."

A faint smile accompanied the monosyllable this time.

"It's rather hard work for a girl like you," Jack remarked.

Meg tossed back her head.

"Hard! 'Tain't nothing; cookin' and cleanin' ain't. It's garden work that's tough. Look at them hands." She dropped the pail and held them up. "Been blistered lots of times hoein' and diggin'."

"It's too bad," cried the young machinist, indignantly. "It ain't fair to make you work like a slave."

"What would you do if you was me?" asked the girl, with a hungry, searching look in her eyes.

For a moment Jack was nonplused.

"I don't know," he replied, slowly; "I might, though, if I thought over it. Are you a relative of his?"

"Not's I know."

"How long have you been here?"

"Ever since I can remember. I didn't mind it so much when Mrs. Pooler was

alive, but since she died I hate it;" and Meg grated her teeth tightly together.

"Where is the house?" asked Mont.

"Over yonder, through the trees."

"Do you think you can get us something to eat?" continued the young man. "We have been out since yesterday, and I'm as hungry as a stray dog."

The girl hesitated.

"We will pay you for it," Mont went on, feeling for his purse, which, luckily, still remained in his pocket.

"Guess I can," said Meg, finally. "Pooler ain't home; he went to the mainland this morning. Did you really go over them falls?" she continued, jerking her thumb in the direction.

[image]

"DID YOU REALLY GO OVER THEM FALLS?" SHE CONTINUED, JERKING HER THUMB IN THE DIRECTION.

"Yes, indeed we did. It was a terrible experience," replied the young man with a shudder.

"Must be. Never heard of 'em comin' out alive--'em as goes over, I mean."

"We are not anxious to try it again," Jack put in.

The "house" consisted of a dilapidated cottage of two rooms and an attic, almost wholly covered by grape vines. Meg led the way around to the back, and motioned them to a bench under a big tree.

"Better stay out here. It's cooler and nicer," she said. "I'll fetch a table;" and in a few seconds she had done so, and placed it before them.

"Don't take too much trouble," said Mont; "we are hungry enough to tackle almost anything."

"'Tain't no trouble--leastwise, not if there's money in it. Pooler worships money."

"Is he rich?" asked Jack.

"Don't ask me!" replied Meg. "I've often heard the men say he was rich, but I never see any money."

"Doesn't he give you any?"

"Not a cent. Say, how will coffee and bread, with some pickerel do? I can get them ready in a few minutes."

"First-rate," replied Mont.

"Then just wait;" and Meg disappeared within the cottage.

"Quite a smart lass," remarked Jack when they were alone.

"Awfully wild, though," returned Mont; "I would like to see this Pooler. Something runs in my mind concerning him--I can't exactly tell what."

"I shouldn't wonder but what he misuses that girl awfully," added Jack, with a shake of his head.

It was not long before Meg returned with quite a substantial meal for both. She set the things before them, and then stood by, ready for further orders.

"What does Mr. Pooler do for a living?" asked Mont, while eating.

"Nothin' 'cept run his farm here," replied the girl. "He's gettin' kinder old."

"He is a farmer, then?"

"Yep. That is, now. He used to work in the tool works at Corney."

"He did?" exclaimed Mont, with interest. "I work there. How long ago was this?"

"I don't know exactly. I heard Mosey and him talkin' 'bout it."

Jack dropped his knife and fork in astonishment.

"Whom did you say?" he ejaculated.

"Mosey," repeated Meg. "Do you know him?"

"I think I do. Is his first name Andy?"

"Yep."

"Well, I'm stumped!" declared the young machinist. "Yes, I know him," he continued bitterly. "And he'll know me, too, when we meet again."

Jack meant all his manner implied. His blood boiled at the thought of the Irishman, and the cowardly treatment he had received at the mill.

"Does Mosey come here often?" he asked.

"Not lately. He used to, him and two or three more. But I oughten to tell you all this! Pooler'll beat me if he finds it out."

"Not if I'm around!" replied Jack, stoutly. "But we will not mention what you have told us."

"Wish you wouldn't. But I don't care anyhow; I'm gettin' tired, and sha'n't stay much longer."

"What will you do?" asked Mont.

"Run away," was the quick reply.

"Where to?"

"I don't know, and I don't care, either. Any place is as good as this, I reckon."

"Perhaps you can find some sort of a home in Corney," suggested the young machinist. "You seem to be quite handy. I will help you if I can."

"And so will I," put in Mont.

"I could do better if I had half a chance," asserted Meg, tapping the ground with her foot.

"May I ask what other men visit Mr. Pooler?" inquired the young man, after a pause.

"A man by the name of Corrigan sometimes comes with Mosey."

"Corrigan!"

Jack and Mont uttered the name together. Here was certainly news. Yet they never dreamt of what was coming.

"Any one else?" asked Jack.

"A man used to come sometimes at night. Pooler thought I never saw him, but I did--and heard who he was, too."

"What was his name?" asked Mont, with just the slightest tremor in his voice.

"Mr. Gray--Felix, Pooler called him."

Mont looked at Jack in deep perplexity.

"There is surely a mystery here," he said.

"You are right," returned the young machinist; "and who knows but what it may concern both of us?"

At this juncture Meg uttered an exclamation.

"There's a boat comin' over!" she cried. "I guess it's Pooler gettin' back!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE MISER OF THE ISLAND

Meg's conjecture was correct. It was Mr. Max Pooler who was the sole occupant of the rowboat that was fast approaching the island.

He pulled a quick stroke, and two minutes brought him to the shore, where, beaching his craft, he jumped out, and walked rapidly toward the cottage.

He was a thin, sallow-complexioned man, with a low forehead and sunken gray eyes. The expression upon his face, especially around his mouth, was a pinched and hard one.

He viewed Jack and Mont in surprise, not unmixed with disapproval, and turned to the girl for an explanation.

"How is this, Meg?" he asked, in a shrill, disagreeable tone of voice. "Whom have you here?"

"Two young men that drifted over the falls," replied the girl, who was somewhat startled by his sudden coming. "I found 'em down by the spring, all tuckered out."

"Over the falls!" Max Pooler's face showed his incredulity. "Never heard of

it afore! When did it happen?"

"We can't tell exactly," replied Jack. "We became unconscious, and came to about an hour or so ago."

"Humph!" The master of the island glanced at the table, where a good portion of the food still remained. "Pretty good dinner you're givin' 'em, Meg," he continued.

The girl was silent. She evidently did not like Max Pooler's remark, and stood biting her finger nails in vexation.

"We are willing to pay for what we've had," broke in Mont. "We were so hungry that we couldn't wait till we got back to town, and so persuaded this--this young lady to provide something for us."

Max Pooler looked relieved.

"Ah, that's all right then," he said, rubbing his hands together in satisfaction. "Pay for what you get and owe no man, has always been my motto, and I find it a very excellent one, too. Tell me something of your adventures. And, by the way, is there anything else you wish?"

"No, I'm done," replied the young machinist.

He was thoroughly disgusted with the man's mean manner, though he did not object to paying for what they had had.

But Mont entered readily into conversation. He had eyed Max Pooler keenly from his arrival, and noticed every action of the man. He briefly related the particulars of what had happened on the river. For obvious reasons he did not mention how either Jack or he had fallen into such a position, nor did he mention any names.

"Awful! terrible! truly remarkable!" were Max Pooler's comments. "But did you see 'em?" he continued, in a tragic whisper.

"See whom?" asked Jack, who was somewhat taken back by this sudden change in the man's manner.

"Why, the ghost in the falls," replied Max Pooler, earnestly, "It is the spirit of a man who went over one night."

Jack laughed.

"We did not see it," he replied. "Besides, I don't believe in them."

"Oh, but this is a ghost sure, I've seen him myself many a time in the moonlight."

"Maybe you saw the man go over, and imagined the rest," suggested Mont. "Did you know him?"

"Oh, no!" replied Max Pooler, starting. "No, indeed, I only heard it was so. But the ghost is there. Sometimes it comes on the island!"

"The man must be a little off on this subject," thought Jack, as he watched Max Pooler's manner.

"I guess there is too much water here to allow of any spirits," said Mont, by way of a joke.

"Never mind, I know what I know," replied Max Pooler, with a shake of his head. "You were mighty lucky to get through safely."

"I'll admit that," returned Jack, rising from the table.

Mont also arose, and looked first at the man and then at the girl.

"If you tell me what we owe you, I'll pay it," he said.

Meg was silent. Had she had her own way she would have charged nothing.

"Everything considered, I guess it's worth a quarter apiece," said Max Pooler. "Provisions are frightfully high."

"I'm well satisfied," replied Mont; and taking out his purse, he withdrew a half dollar, and handed it over. "I am very much obliged to you," he added to Meg.

Max Pooler's eyes sparkled as they rested upon the shining silver. He grasped the coin eagerly, and after examining it, stowed it carefully away in his bosom.

There was a pause. Now that he had their money, the owner of the island was evidently anxious to have them take their departure. Both Jack and Mont wished to see more of this old man, but neither could frame a plausible excuse for remaining.

"I suppose your friends will be anxious 'bout you," remarked Max Pooler, by way of helping them off.

Jack's thoughts instantly reverted to Deb, and he said no doubt they would.

"But we have no boat," he added, suddenly. "Can you lend us one?"

"Only got the one I use," replied the old man, shortly.

"I can take 'em over," put in Meg, eagerly. "'T won't take long."

"We will pay you for the use of the boat," added Jack.

The mention of pay immediately altered the matter in Max Pooler's eyes.

"I'll do it for another quarter," he said. "Times are hard and one must make his living."

Jack made no reply. The closeness of the man disgusted him, and he paid the amount without a word.

Meg led the way toward the beach. Their backs were scarcely turned before Max Pooler disappeared in the cottage.

"The mean miser," burst out the girl, when they were beyond hearing, "He's itchin' to put that seventy-five cents along with the rest of his money! Hope you don't blame me for what he's done. Wouldn't have cost you a cent if I'd have had my way!"

"We were very thankful to get something," said Mont, "and were perfectly willing to pay for it, too."

Jack was silent. He half wished that Meg, interesting as she was, was not

present. He wished to talk with his friend over the odd news that the last half hour had brought them. He was half inclined to question the young girl further, but did not wish to excite her suspicion, and was diplomatic enough not to get at it excepting in the direct way.

Of one thing he was certain; there was a good deal below the surface that did not yet show, and he determined that he would not drop the matter until he had learned what it was.

"Did you ever hear of a wrecked yacht around here?" suddenly asked Mont of Meg.

"Nope--that is," she hesitated. "What makes you ask that?"

"Oh, I only wanted to know," replied the young man, apparently unconcerned.

"Pooler said I was never to speak of it," returned Meg. "He thinks I don't know where it is, but I do."

"Show it to us, will you?" asked Mont, eagerly.

Meg shrank back.

"It's haunted!" she exclaimed. "Besides, Pooler would kill me if he found it out."

"We'll never tell him, will we, Jack?"

"Certainly not," replied the young machinist, to whom this new move was only another mystery.

"Besides, we intend to be your friends, you know," continued Mont.

"Well, then, come on," replied Meg, finally. "I don't care if he likes it or not. 'Taint a very nice place though."

"Never mind. We can't find any worse or more dangerous places than we have already gone through."

Meg picked her way along one bank of the island for nearly a quarter of a mile. Jack and Mont followed closely.

The ground was covered with a rank growth of reeds and rushes, and in many places was damp and slippery.

At last they reached a deep cave that ran directly between a cluster of twisted and bending willows. The spot was at the upper end of the island, and in full view of the falls.

Here, half hidden by the tall, undergrowth, rested the hull of a dismantled yacht, bearing upon her weather-beaten stern the half-obliterated name:

"KITTY."

CHAPTER XVI.

ON BOARD THE "KITTY"

"Hello!" exclaimed Jack, in astonishment. "I never knew such large craft came here."

"It's really haunted," replied Meg. "Mustn't go near it."

The young machinist laughed.

"Seems to me everything is haunted around here," he said, "Were you ever on board?"

"Nope, Pooler would kill me if I went. He's terrible when he's mad;" and Meg shook her head as the memory of past trials arose in her mind.

Meanwhile Mont had gone on ahead, and now, not without some difficulty, reached the deck of the stranded vessel. Jack followed him, leaving the girl behind.

"Don't be long, please," called out Meg; "I don't like to stay here, and besides, I've got to get back, you know."

"We will stay only a few minutes," replied the young machinist.

Mont had walked aft, and picking his way over the odds and ends that littered the deck, Jack joined him.

"Jack, do you know what I believe?" asked the young man, when they were out of Meg's hearing.

"What?"

"I believe that this yacht was once my father's," replied Mont, earnestly. "His was named the Kitty, and was last seen on this river, above Corney. He used it to cruise around the lakes in."

"Yes, but that was above the falls," returned Jack. "You don't mean----" he began.

"Yes, I do. The water was higher years ago, and I'm convinced that his boat was caught in the stream and went over the falls."

Jack stepped back in astonishment.

"But he could never live through it," he cried.

"He was never seen after that," returned the young man, gravely, "Yet we came out alive," he added. "If he was on the boat he might have escaped."

Mont led the way carefully down the half-rotten companion way into the

cabin below.

There the air was foul and stifling. It was totally dark, but Jack stumbled around until he found a small window and threw open a shutter.

A curious sight met their gaze. The place looked as if it had been left immediately after a struggle, although this might have been caused by a violent movement of the craft. A big armchair lay upset in one corner, with a pile of books in another. On the table lay a pile of written and printed papers, some of which had been swept to the floor, and were covered with the ink from an upturned bottle, which, however, had dried years before. Dust, mold and cobwebs were everywhere.

Jack picked up some of the written matter and brushing off the dust tried to read it.

"It seems to be an agreement," he said to Mont, who was looking over his shoulder. "An agreement about an invention, that----"

"It is my father's handwriting!" exclaimed the young man, in an unnatural voice; "I could tell it in a thousand."

Jack turned the document over.

"I guess you're right," he said. "It seems to relate to some improvement in making tools." He looked at the title. "Gracious me!"

"What is it?" cried Mont.

"It is drawn up between the Gray Brothers of the first part, and Martin Willington of the second!"

"And Martin Willington----" began the young man.

"Martin Willington was my father!" ejaculated the young machinist, in great surprise.

At that instant both heard Meg's voice calling loudly.

"Better clear out. Here comes Pooler, and that Andy Mosey is with him!"

Jack and Mont were startled by the unexpected cry from Meg. Both were thoroughly absorbed in the document which the former had picked up from the floor, and for an instant neither caught the full meaning of the girl's announcement.

"Andy Mosey!" repeated the young machinist, looking up from the agitated reading of that faded manuscript. "How in the world did he get here?"

"Heaven only knows!" ejaculated Mont. "Affairs seem to be all mixed, and I give it up. One thing is certain: he and Pooler are close friends."

"Or else have a mutual interest at stake," was Jack's comment. "Just as we two seem to have here," he continued, folding up the paper and putting it in an inside pocket.

"You're right. But what brings Mosey up to this end of the island?"

"Perhaps he thinks to find one or both of our bodies," suggested the young

machinist.

"Did you hear me?" called out Meg again. "Pooler and Mosey are comin', and they've both got guns! Better skip out!"

Meg's language was forcible even if not well chosen. In her anxiety to do her two friends a good turn, she had overcome her dread of the so-styled haunted craft, and approached to within a few feet of the side, so that her shrill voice sounded plainly.

"It's a shame to leave these things here," said Mont, as he too, stuffed several papers in his pockets. "This boat was undoubtedly my father's property, and I believe I'm entitled to whatever is here."

"Certainly you are," replied Jack. "As it is, I intend to come back myself. But we can't do much, now, and if those two men see us they may make it very unpleasant, to say the least."

"Wish we were armed. This is the first chance I have ever had of learning the true state of my father's affairs, and how he died, and I don't want to leave until I have sifted the matter thoroughly."

Mont was already on the companionway, and Jack quickly followed him.

"It's queer that Pooler should know that this stranded boat is here, and yet not touch a thing on board," remarked the young machinist. "He seems to be so close, it's a wonder he hasn't carried all the stuff away."

"You don't remember that he thinks this is haunted," replied Mont.

Jack laughed.

"Do you believe that yarn?" he asked.

"Not altogether; yet the man is certainly a strange fellow."

Meg was eagerly awaiting them on the shore.

"I don't see Mosey and Pooler," said Jack, as he stepped to the rail and looked over.

"They're comin' through the woods," explained the young girl, hurriedly; "I just saw 'em through the clearing ahead."

"What brings them here?" asked Mont.

"Don't know. Pooler comes only once in a great while, and I never knew that Mosey to go anywhere but to the cottage."

"Well, what shall we do?" asked the young man, turning to Jack.

"Better get out of his way," suggested Meg. "He's a wicked man when he's mad, and he'll be the maddest man in the district if he catches you two on this boat."

"Suppose we go below and hide," replied the young machinist. "It ought to be an easy thing to do so on such a craft as this."

"Just the idea!" exclaimed Mont. "How slow of me not to think of it."

"But how about the girl?"

"Ain't you goin'?" asked Meg impatiently.

"No; we intend to hide on board," replied Jack. "We were just thinking about you. I hope you won't tell Mr. Pooler where we are?"

"Not unless you want me to."

"Which we certainly do not."

"Suppose you go back to the boat, and get it ready," replied the young machinist after a moment's thought. "We may wish to leave in a hurry."

"All right."

"I can trust you?" he added, with a smile.

"Trust me? Just you try me, that's all!" and with a toss of her head, Meg darted away into the bushes, and was lost to sight.

At the same instant Mont caught hold of Jack and dragged him behind the cabin.

"I just saw Mosey and this Pooler through those trees yonder!" he exclaimed. "They'll be here in another moment!"

"Let's go below at once. We want to get the 'lay of the land,' and secure the best place we can," returned the young machinist, leading the way back to the cabin.

They found several staterooms, all but one of which were locked. The open one seemed to be as inviting a place as any, and this they entered, closing the door carefully behind them.

They were none too soon, for hardly had they settled in the place before they heard the two men clamber on board.

The newcomers were evidently having a spirited confab, but as the deck was thick, not a word could be heard below. Their heavy boots sounded up and down the planking several times, and then the two in hiding heard them come down into the cabin.

"You must have been mistaken," Max Pooler was saying; "I know they were on the island, but the girl rowed 'em to the mainland half an hour ago."

"Oi say no," replied Mosey. "Oi seen them coming over here from me boat. But why should they be on the island at all?" he continued with apparent indifference.

"They fell in the river and went over the falls."

"And lived? Come now, Max----"

"They say so, anyway. Of course I didn't believe the story. I guess they're only a couple of young tramps," said the master of the island. "But if they are still hanging around I want to know it."

"Tramps!" burst out the Irishman. "Phat are ye talkin' about? Do ye mane to say ye don't know who they are?"

"Why no," replied Max Pooler in surprise.

He had tried the doors of two of the staterooms, and was now walking toward the others.

"Well, thin, let me tell ye, one was Jack Willington, whose father got up that machinery years ago----"

"What!"

"And the other wan was Monteray Gray's son."

The miser of the island uttered a loud cry.

"You are fooling!" he said, excitedly.

"No, I ain't."

"Why, I thought his son was dead, that he--he died here," continued Max Pooler, with a white face.

Mosey laughed, a cold, hard laugh.

"Max, me b'y, ye can't kill that lad. If ye'd go out into the worruld more ye'd larn more. Now his father----"

The miser of the island grasped the Irishman fiercely by the shoulder.

"Stop there!" he commanded; "I won't have it--remember that--I won't have it!"

CHAPTER XVII.

MEG TO THE RESCUE

The last part of Mosey and Max Pooler's conversation would no doubt have greatly interested Jack and Mont had they heard it, but the truth was that as soon as they saw the two men preparing to search the place, they immediately sought for some means to escape.

In one corner of the stateroom they found a small door leading by a narrow passage to what, for the want of a better name, may be termed the forecastle. Why it had been put there was not apparent--except, perhaps, to allow a direct communication between the captain and the men, but nevertheless, they used it, and when Max Pooler spoke so sharply to Mosey, the two in hiding had again regained the deck, and did not hear the short quarrel that followed.

"Where to now?" asked Mont, "We can't stay here, that's certain."

"There is Meg with the boat!" exclaimed Jack, pointing down the shore. "Wonder if we can get her to come alongside without them finding it out?"

"We can try," replied the young man, and taking out his handkerchief, he

waved it vigorously.

In an instant the young girl caught the signal, and came rowing up.

"Where are they?" she asked, anxiously.

"Down below," replied Jack in a whisper. "Don't make a noise or they will hear you."

"All right. Jump in, both of you."

Mont and Jack were not slow in taking her advice. Both scrambled over the rotten rail, and into the boat, which fortunately was rather roomy.

"Shall I take the oars?" asked the young machinist, who, though not an expert, could still handle the oars fairly well.

"Nope. I can row better'n either of you. Off we go!" And with one quick stroke this slender girl sent the craft far out on the water.

Before she had time to take a dozen strokes Max Pooler appeared upon the deck closely followed by Mosey.

The surprise was great on both sides, and for an instant nothing was said or done.

"Come back, Meg!" called out Max Pooler, rushing to the rail as soon as he had recovered from his astonishment. "Come back, or it will be the worse for you!"

"I'm goin' to row 'em over to the shore," replied the young girl. "It's just what I started to do."

The master of the island stamped his foot in rage. "You little good for nothing! Bring that boat back without another word!"

Meg continued to row without replying.

"Do you intend to mind me?" screamed Max Pooler. "If you don't, as sure as I live I'll shoot you!" and he drew up his gun as he spoke.

"Hold up!" shouted Mont, fearful of harm coming to the girl. "We'll come aboard."

"No we won't!" put in Meg, with a strong show of spirit, "I said I'd take you to the mainland, and I'll keep my word, shootin' or no shootin'!"

Max Pooler pulled back the hammer of the gun he carried. Seeing the action Jack jumped up and placed himself directly in front of the girl.

"Thanks," said Meg. "It's mighty good of you to try to save me, but I don't want you to run such a risk. I've got to have it out with him sooner or later, and now is as good a time as any," and she placed herself again in range.

"Did you hear what I said?" called Max Pooler, leaning over to make himself heard: "I'll give you just five seconds to turn that----"

Crack!

As I have stated, the guardrail on the yacht was rotten, and under the unusual weight, it gave way with a crash.

Splash!

The miser of the island had lost his balance, and after vainly clutching the air to save himself, had floundered into the water and mud below!

[image]

THE MISER OF THE ISLAND HAD LOST HIS BALANCE, AND AFTER VAINLY CLUTCHING THE AIR TO SAVE HIMSELF, HAD FLOUNDERED INTO THE WATER AND MUD BELOW.

"Hello!" exclaimed Jack. "There's an accident that's lucky for us."

"He'll have all he can do to take care of himself," remarked Mont.

"Serves him right," put in Meg, with a laugh. She had not taken the whole affair very seriously. "Maybe it'll cool his blood."

The three saw Mosey rush to Max Pooler's assistance, and then, without waiting to see the outcome of the mishap, the girl again bent to the oars, and sent the boat flying onward.

"What do you intend to do?" asked Jack of Meg, as they neared the shore. "You can't very well go back. I'll help you if I can."

"I don't know," replied the young girl, in perplexity. "I've had enough of life over there."

"Suppose you go over to Farmer Farrell's with us, I think he will board you for a few days anyway, and in the meantime you can find out what's best to do."

"I ain't got no money."

"We'll make that all right," replied the young machinist. "But didn't Pooler ever pay you anything?"

"Pay me? Don't catch him giving out a cent if he can help it. All I got was these duds--'em as was left when his wife died."

"Not much, certainly," put in Mont, surveying the tattered and patched dress.

"Other folks earn money, and I guess I can, too, if I try," continued Meg, as she ran the boat up the accustomed beaching place.

"Certainly you can," declared Jack.

"And have a better living than you had at the island," added the young man.

It was growing dusk when they stepped ashore. Meg tied the boat fast and left the oars on the seats, certain that the craft would not remain uncalled for long.

It was but a short walk to Farmer Farrell's place. They found him driving home the cows, and on the doorstep, joined by his wife, the two honest people listened to what Jack and Mont had to say about themselves and Meg.

The girl stood in the background, much of her former shyness having re-

turned. At the conclusion of the tale, Mrs. Farrell took her hand warmly.

"Poor child! you've had a hard time of it, truly!" she said, "But you sha'n't have any more trouble--at least, not for the present, eh, father?"

"No, we can keep her easily enough," replied her husband. "You want help, Martha, summer coming on, with all the extra work."

"And we'll pay you, too," continued Mrs. Farrell.

"Oh, thank you!" exclaimed Meg. "You 're real kind. Maybe I can't do things just right, but I guess I can learn, and you needn't give me a cent till I do."

"Then, that's settled," said Jack, somewhat pleased at having the matter so easily arranged.

"If only Pooler don't make me go back."

"You say you're no relation of his?" asked Mont.

"Not's I know. He always called me a picked-up."

"Then just let him try it," put in Farmer Farrell, grimly. "I know the man well. He pretends to own Blackbird Island, but he hain't got no more title 'n I have."

"And maybe I can get you a few dresses from my sister, and----" began Jack.

"Well, there, by Jinks!" exclaimed Farmer Farrell, jumping up from the step upon which he had been sitting. "I almost forgot it, being so interested in your story. Your sister was here looking for you."

"Deb!" Jack was indeed astonished, and so was Mont. "What did she want here? Looking for me?"

"Yes; she's had a terrible time. Your model's stolen, and she's been put out of the house for not paying the rent."

The news startled the young machinist. In the excitement he had forgotten all about Mr. Hammerby and the quit notice.

"Did she say where she had moved to?" he asked anxiously.

"No, she was in too much of a hurry. She was frightened half to death on account of your being missing."

"No doubt of it. Poor Deb! Her troubles are as bad as ours," remarked Mont.

"Which way did she go?" was the young machinist's question.

"Toward home again," said Farrell; "I wanted her to stay the worst way when I found out who she was, but she wouldn't think of it."

"Maybe we can overtake her," suggested Mont.

"We'll try, anyway," returned Jack.

He was much worried over the fact that Deb had been compelled to vacate the old home; and then he suddenly remembered that all of his money had been stolen by Corrigan.

"Without a home and without money," he thought dismally. "Well, thank God, my life has been spared, and, as Deb said, 'maybe it will all come out right in the end.'"

Yet his heart was by no means light, as Mont and he set out for Corney.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DEB AT THE MILL

The apartments which the kind-hearted Miss Parks allowed Deb to have were small but pleasant, and the bright sunshine that strolled in the back windows did much toward brightening up Deb's naturally lively disposition.

By the aid of the energetic elderly maiden the furniture from the former Willington rooms was quickly set to rights, a good part of it being stored in the garret until--when?

Deb asked herself that question many times as she sat on the edge of the bed, after Miss Parks had gone below.

"If Jack was only here," she sighed. "Where can he have gone? I will never, never believe he has run away, no matter what Mr. Benton or the others say. Something has surely happened to him."

It was not long before she decided to start on a regular search for her brother, and going down stairs she told Miss Parks of her intention.

"Well, dear, do just as you think best," was that lady's reply. "Where do you intend to go?"

"I shall visit that farmer's place first," replied the girl. "Perhaps they can give me some information."

"I hope so. But have a cup of tea before you leave?"

"Thank you; I really don't care for it."

"Oh, but you must," insisted the good lady. "It will do you a heap of good. Just the thing to quiet your nerves."

Rather than displease her friend, Deb finally consented; and spent ten minutes in the back parlor, sipping the elderly maiden's favorite Young Hyson.

The girl was soon on her way. Farmer Farrell was well known throughout the district, and it did not take her long to reach his place.

She was thoroughly dismayed to learn that Jack had started for home at sundown the day before.

Not knowing where to go or what to do next, she retraced her steps toward Corney. She was in no hurry, and wandered in deep and painful contemplation, to one side of the road.

Near the old mill she stumbled over a bundle that lay in the grass near a tree. Without thinking, she was about to step over it, when something about the cloth covering attracted her attention, and picking it up, she was amazed to find that it was Jack's kit, wrapped in his overalls!

"How in the world did that get here!" she exclaimed, and then turned deathly white, as a horrible suspicion crossed her mind: "Oh, it could never be! no, no, no, no!"

She dropped the bundle and ran down to the water's edge. The spot was just below the mill, and in a little cove, where the river was comparatively quiet.

Nothing was to be seen--nothing but the sparkle of the sun, and the waving shadows cast by the trees overhead.

"It's awfully lonely here," she said to herself. "If Jack came here----"

She was startled to see the shadow of a man close beside her. Looking up she gave a slight scream as she recognized the tall form of Corrigan.

She did not know that the man had been watching her for some time, revolving in his mind what he should say about Jack if asked any questions.

He advanced to her with a smiling face, ignoring entirely the way he had treated her the previous evening.

"Got tired of waiting for Jack to get back?" he asked.

Deb was too much alarmed to offer a reply at once.

"Yes--I am," she stammered.

"Thought you would be. He ought to have sent you word," continued Corrigan. "He sold the model I took, just as I told you he would," he added.

"Where is he?" asked the girl, thrown off her guard by the villain's cool manner.

"Around here somewhere. He's been here and over to Redrock twice since yesterday. He got the contract to fix up the machinery in this old mill. The man who bought it wants the job done as soon as possible, so he went right to work. I'm helping him on the drawing. I'm a draughtsman, you know."

Deb did not know, nor was she aware that Corrigan's statement was purely fictitious.

"Where is Jack now?" she asked, turning over the plausibility of the story in her mind.

"Just went up the stream a ways, to catch the true drift of the tide," replied Corrigan. "He thinks they will get more power if the wheel is shifted around. Better come in the place and wait for him."

Deb hesitated. In spite of all the man was saying, she hated to trust him. Yet, if he was speaking the truth, certainly her treatment of him the previous evening had not been right at all.

"There are some benches inside," continued the fellow; "you are tired, I can

see, and the rest will do you good. Jack will land at the bottom room."

Rather reluctantly Deb followed the man into the building.

"Here you are," he said, pulling a bench from the wall, and motioning her to a seat. "You mustn't think I bear you a grudge for what you did last night," he continued, pleasantly.

The girl sat down without replying. The spot was near an open window, and she strained her eyes to catch sight of any craft that might be coming toward the mill.

"Perhaps after all, it's all right, and I'm a silly goose to be so worried," she thought; "it's just like Jack to take hold of the first job that comes to hand. For all I know his silence may be caused by his good luck."

Yet when she remembered about being locked in and, later, turned out of their home, she concluded it was a serious matter, and wondered what her brother would say to that.

It was fast turning to twilight, and the evening sun cast long flickering rays across the rapid stream. Had her mind been tranquil, Deb would have enjoyed the scene greatly, but now her one thought was upon the boat she hoped would speedily appear.

"Object to smoking?" asked Corrigan, after a brief spell of silence.

"Oh, no, smoke as much as you please," replied the girl.

Corrigan filled his pipe, and lighting it, sat down. He was by no means a dull man, and to carry out his hastily formed deception, he began making a few apparent calculations on a bit of paper which he held upon his knee.

He was waiting for Mosey to return from Blackbird Island. He expected that his brother-in-law would see Max Pooler, and transact some private business that interested the three, and from which he expected to receive a neat sum of money. Several times Deb turned to watch Corrigan.

"He seems sincere enough," she kept saying to herself, yet at the bottom of her heart her uneasiness increased. The man hardly knew what to do. On the impulse of the moment he had detained Deb, thinking that he might in some way make her shield him from the punishment he knew he richly deserved, yet now he was not sure he could manage her.

A quarter of an hour, a very long quarter to Deb, passed.

"My brother ought to be in sight," she said. "He ought to stop working. It is getting late."

"Maybe he's struck a new idea," replied Corrigan. "You know he hates to give up unless a point is settled."

Deb knew that this was true of Jack. But might not her brother go straight home, without returning to the mill?

"I guess I'll go up the road to meet him," she said, rising.

Corrigan stepped over to the door. "No, you must stay here," he replied, decidedly.

"Why--why, what do you mean!" exclaimed Deb, turning pale.

"I mean just this," replied Corrigan, catching her by the arm, "you are my prisoner, and must do as I say."

[image]

"I MEAN JUST THIS," REPLIED CORRIGAN, CATCHING HER BY THE ARM, "YOU ARE MY PRISONER AND MUST DO AS I SAY."

CHAPTER XIX.

IN CORRIGAN'S POWER

For the moment after Corrigan made his assertion that Deb must do as he said, the terrified girl could not speak. She stared at the man in terror.

"Wha--what do you mean?" she gasped at last.

"You heard what I said," he answered coolly. "I want no nonsense from you either."

"But--but--what are you treating me so for?"

"That's my business, Miss Willington."

"And I must consider myself your prisoner?" she added, growing more pale than ever.

"That's it."

"You have no right to keep me here."

"Perhaps not, but you must remember that might makes right in some cases."

"Where is my brother Jack? I do not believe that you have told the truth about him."

"If you don't believe me, why do you want me to answer your questions?" he returned with a wicked grin on his unshaven face.

"You have harmed Jack in some way--I am sure of it!"

"No, no! To tell you honestly I haven't the least idea where he is," said Corrigan hastily.

Under no circumstances did he wish to stand for the crimes which his

brother-in-law had committed. As it was, he felt that he had enough to answer for on his own account.

There was an awkward pause after this. Then of a sudden Deb started to scream, but he quickly clapped his hand over her mouth.

"None of that!" he said, roughly. "If you won't be quiet, do you know what I'll have to do?"

"I guess you are mean enough to do almost anything!" burst out poor Deb.

"I'll have to gag you, that's what. I won't have you yelling for help, remember that!"

"But I do not wish to remain here!" insisted Deb, desperately.

"Oh, pshaw! I won't hurt you. Sit down and keep quiet."

But the girl could not compose herself and began to walk up and down the mill floor. She wished to get to the door and edged in that direction, but Corrigan quickly headed her off.

"You come with me," he said, presently. "I ain't going to trust you down here any more."

"I shan't go a step with you," she answered, vehemently. "O, Mr. Corrigan, please let me go! Please do!" And she clasped her hands and held them out toward him.

"Don't cut up so, Miss Willington. As I said before, I shan't harm a hair of your head. But I must make you stay here for a while. Now come with me."

"But where do you wish me to go?"

"There is a loft overhead. I must lock you up there, but only for a little while."

"But why are you doing this?"

"As I said before, that must remain my business. Come."

She shook her head.

"I--I cannot!" she cried, and began to weep.

Muttering something under his breath the villain caught her by the arms, just as he had caught her when he had come for the model, and in a trice he was carrying her up to the loft. She struggled as best she could but this availed her nothing.

"Now you keep quiet, or I'll surely gag you," he said, as he set her down on the dusty floor. "If you start up any kind of a racket it will be the worse for you."

Having thus delivered himself, Corrigan went below again, closing the door to the loft behind him and fastened one of the bolts which was there to hold it in place.

Left to herself, Deb stood dazed for a moment in the center of the floor. Then she tottered to an empty box standing near and sank upon this, the picture of misery and despair.

What should she do? What could she do?

Over and over she asked herself the questions, but without reaching a satisfying answer. She was the prisoner of a wicked man, and to get away from him appeared impossible.

The loft was very dusty, and from overhead hung huge cobwebs full of dirt and spiders. It was quite dark, for the only window was a little affair overlooking the river and the four tiny panes of this were thick with grime, the accumulation of years.

At last she arose, and with a long-drawn sigh made her way toward the window. It was nailed fast and could not be raised, so she had to content herself with scraping some of the dirt from the glass and looking through the spots thus afforded.

She could see but little, and nothing which gave her satisfaction. Below her was the broad and swift-flowing river, and beyond was a grassy bank, backed up by brush and tall trees. No boat was in sight, nor any human being.

She listened attentively, and not hearing Corrigan began to wonder if he had left the building.

"If he has I must escape somehow," she told herself. "I wonder if I can't pry open that door?"

She knelt over the door and tried it with her bare hands. But this was not sufficient, and getting up she looked around for something which might prove useful to her. In a corner of the loft rested a rusty iron bar, somewhat sharpened at one end. She brought this forth and after inspecting it felt certain that it would prove just what was needed.

Approaching the trapdoor she called out softly:

"Mr. Corrigan! Mr. Corrigan, are you down there?" And then, receiving no answer, she went on: "Mr. Corrigan, I must speak to you. Won't you please listen?"

Still the silence continued, and now her heart arose within her. He must certainly have gone away, and if that was so, now was her time to escape!

Trembling with anxiety, Deb began to work away on the door with the iron bar. At last she got the end of the bar in the crack of the door, and then she began to pry the door upwards. At first it refused to budge, but suddenly the bolt gave way and then the door came open with ease.

She was at liberty, or at least liberty was within her grasp, and with her heart thumping madly in her breast, she began to descend to the floor below, bar in hand. Once she thought she heard a noise outside and stopped short. What if that awful man should be coming back! But the noise ceased and was not repeated, and she went on and soon stood at the spot where he had first made her a prisoner.

The door to the roadway was open, and poor Deb could hardly resist the temptation to fly forth at the top of her speed. But then she remembered that

Corrigan might be within easy distance of the mill. If that was so, and he caught sight of her, he would surely make after her.

"I must watch my chance, and if he is around, I must get away on the sly," was what she told herself. Curiously enough, while up in the loft, she had not discovered Jack's model, which was tucked away out of her sight.

With bated breath she tiptoed her way to the open doorway and peered forth. No one was in sight on the road, nor at the water's edge near the mill. All was as silent as a tomb, save for the distant rushing of the water over the rocks.

Waiting no longer, Debt left the mill and started for the road. She was still terribly frightened and ran on as if some great demon was after her trying to clutch her shoulder. In her agitation she did not notice a tree root growing in her pathway, and catching her foot in this, she pitched headlong on the stones and grass.

It was a cruel fall, and as she fell she could not keep back a cry of alarm, followed by one of pain, for her elbow was hurt not a little.

At the cry there was a crashing in the bushes overlooking the river at a point above the mill, and a moment later Corrigan appeared. He had gone out on a point of land to see if he could catch sight anywhere of Andy Mosey.

"What! did you get away?" he roared.

"Let me go!" screamed Deb. "Oh, my elbow! Let me go!"

"Let you go nothing!" he answered, and caught hold of her once more. "Come back with me! Come back this minute!"

"No, no!" she moaned. "I--I don't want to go back!"

"But you shall go back," he answered. And despite her struggles he lifted her into his arms once more and returned with her to the mill.

CHAPTER XX.

MONT TELLS His STORY

As Jack and Mont journeyed on the way to Corney, the young machinist noticed that the young man was rather silent, and when spoken to replied only in monosyllables.

"I suppose he's speculating about those papers and the stranded yacht," thought Jack. "Perhaps they will be valuable to him when he comes to settle up with his uncle. I'd just like to know what interest father had in that tool machin-

ery. Perhaps the patent is still ours, or a royalty on it. As soon as I find Deb, and things are settled a bit, I'm going to investigate the whole subject."

Jack's surmise concerning Mont was correct.

"What do you think of my uncle?" asked the young man, after a long period of silence.

"What do I think of him?" asked the young machinist in turn. "In what way?"

"Why, as to his dealings with people in general."

"Well, I--I really, Mont, I don't want to say anything that will hurt your feelings," stammered Jack, not wishing to be harsh with so dear a friend, and yet determined to speak only the truth.

"Never mind my feelings. Just speak your mind."

Jack was silent a moment.

"I think he's outrageously mean and close!" he burst out. "He doesn't treat you, nor any one else in the tool works fairly! He's the hardest master to work for in the town!"

The young machinist could be blunt when the occasion demanded, and he did not mince matters now.

"I guess you are right," replied Mont, shaking his head affirmatively. "And yet----" he hesitated.

"What?"

"I hardly dare say what is in my mind, Jack. But I want a friend's advice."

"And I'll give it willingly."

"And keep the matter to yourself?"

"Certainly, if you wish it."

"Then I've got this to say about my uncle, Felix Gray," declared Mont. "He is either treating me first-rate--which I don't believe--or else he is the worst scoundrel in Corney!"

Jack was dumfounded.

"The worst scoundrel in Corney?" he repeated almost breathlessly. "You surely don't mean it!"

"Yes, I do," replied the young man, decidedly.

"Don't think I say so hastily. I've thought over the matter a long time. Things can't go on as they have much longer, and when the break comes, I want somebody to know my side of the story."

"Yes, go on."

"In the first place, you must remember that Mr. Gray is not my full uncle. He and my father were only half brothers, so we are not so closely connected as people imagine."

"That's so," replied Jack, trying to catch a glimpse of what his friend was

driving at.

"My father was ten years younger than his step-brother," continued Mont, slowly. "He was quite well off, having been left considerable money by an old aunt, who always took a great interest in him. My uncle Felix induced him, shortly after receiving his inheritance, to locate at Corney, and both became equal partners in the tool works."

"On your father's capital?"

"So I imagined; his brother putting his experience and command of trade against my father's money."

"Then you really own a half interest in the works!" exclaimed Jack, in surprise.

"So I always believed. But listen. My father died suddenly, it was said. I returned home in time to hear his will read. In this, his property, without being specified, was left to me as the only surviving member of the family, with Felix Gray as the sole executor and my guardian."

"It was a good deal to trust in his hands."

"I suppose my father had unlimited confidence in his brother. I trusted him, too, and continued at school for three years longer.

"When seventeen years old I returned home, and asked him if I was not old enough to take an active position at the works, and then he offered me my present clerkship, and astonished me by asserting that my father had squandered most of his wealth by extravagant living, and that several hundred dollars was all there was remaining of my share."

"And you think?" began the young machinist, who was beginning to see through the situation.

"What would you think, Jack?" asked the young man, earnestly. "My father lived well--owned the yacht we just left, and all that--but was on the whole, I've been told, a prudent man. Now you know my uncle, what do you make of the matter?"

"Did Mr. Gray ever offer to let you examine the accounts?"

"Only those at the tool works, but not the private ones at home."

"Then, to say the least, he is certainly not acting as a guardian should," declared Jack. "And I think you would be perfectly justified in demanding an examination."

"That's your honest opinion?"

"It is, Mont. If he is acting right he won't mind it, and if he isn't, why the sooner you find it out the better. From my own experience I am sure he would stoop pretty low to increase his wealth or position."

"Yes, but that--that----" hesitated the young man, his face flushing.

"I know what you mean," replied Jack quickly. "To deprive you of what's

yours is a crime punishable by imprisonment, and you hate to have such a thing connected with any one in your family. But it's not your fault, and you ought to have your rights."

"Yes, but the publicity?" faltered Mont.

"Oh, pshaw! you don't owe the public anything!" exclaimed the young machinist, somewhat impatiently, so anxious was he to see Mont get his rights. "Perhaps the affair can be settled privately."

"I wish it could," returned the young man eagerly. "I would sacrifice a good deal to have it done in that way."

Mont's nature was a shrinking one. Had he been less diffident it is probable that he would have demanded an account from Mr. Felix Gray long before this.

"How will you approach your uncle?" asked Jack. "Have you any proofs to show that all is not right?"

"I think I have. During the fire I helped carry out a desk from the library, and the other fellow let his end fall, and burst open one of the drawers. The contents rolled out on the ground, and in putting the papers back I came across a bundle marked with my father's name. I was at first going to put it with the rest, but as matters stand, changed my mind, and pocketed it. I took it down to the office, but haven't been able to examine it, except in a general way. And then those documents from the yacht----"

"Here they are," replied Jack, producing them. "You have some, too."

"Yes, quite a bundle."

Mont undid them, and tried to read some of the faded manuscript.

"It's too dark to see much," he observed. "If I'm not mistaken, my father wrote everything that is here."

"It's queer that Pooler should leave all those things on the yacht undisturbed," returned the young machinist. "One would think that such a man as he would have ransacked the boat from stem to stern."

"He certainly must have a reason,", said the young man. "Or else--I've been thinking--he may be a little off in his mind. Did you notice what a restless look his eyes had?"

"Yes, as if he expected to be nabbed by some one."

"What Mosey and Corrigan and my uncle do there beats me."

"And then the yacht. Was your father on board when he died?"

"I don't know. I always supposed he was at home, and never asked about it."

Both felt that for the present at least, the solution of this question was beyond their power to reach, and they lapsed into silence.

They were now near the old mill, and remembering the kit he had dropped when he discovered Mosey, Jack made a search for it.

"What are you looking for?" asked Mont.

"My tools I dropped--gracious, listen!"

A shrill, girlish voice penetrated the air, and fairly struck him to the heart.

"Help! Jack! Help!"

"It's Deb!" he ejaculated. "She's in trouble!" and he ran toward the old building, closely followed by Mont.

It took but a few seconds to reach the place. The door was tightly closed, but with one heavy kick the young machinist burst it open.

They were astonished at the sight within.

There was Corrigan--his red face redder than ever with rage--and in his arms, her hair flying, and her dress plainly showing the effects of her terrible struggle for liberty, was poor Deb!

CHAPTER XXI.

CORRIGAN MAKES A MOVE

Both Jack and Mont had had surprising adventures in plenty, but both of them agreed that none of them equaled the present one.

The noise in the room prevented Corrigan from hearing their entrance, and it was not until Jack's strong hand grasped his arm that he realized the sudden intrusion, and let go his hold upon Deb.

As for the poor girl, she was too exhausted to speak, but with a glad look of recognition, sank back in a faint, supported by Mont, who sprang forward to prevent her from falling to the floor.

"You miserable coward!" exclaimed the young machinist, his blood boiling at a fever heat. "What do you mean by holding my sister in this way?"

With a strong push of his powerful arm he sent the man flying into a corner. It was lucky that he had no weapon in his hands, or Corrigan's career might have received a severe set back.

[image]

WITH A STRONG PUSH OF HIS POWERFUL ARM, HE SENT THE MAN FLYING INTO A CORNER.

"Are you hurt?" asked Mont of Deb, as the girl presently opened her eyes,

and gave a little gasp.

"I--I think not," she replied, slowly. "Oh, how glad I am that both of you came when you did!"

"What brought you here?" asked the young man.

"I was looking for Jack."

Meanwhile Corrigan had risen to his feet, and stood in a corner, his chagrin at being caught showing itself plainly upon his face. Jack faced him, his hand clenched, ready to strike instantly, if necessary.

"Well, what have you got to say for yourself?" demanded the young machinist.

Corrigan offered no reply. The sudden turn in affairs was something he could not understand. He bit his lip and tried to put on a bold and careless front, but the effort was a failure.

"He stole your model, Jack!" cried Deb.

"So I heard," replied her brother. "What have you done with my property?" he added to Corrigan.

"I haven't anything of yours," was Corrigan's cool reply. "It's all a mistake."

"No, it isn't, Jack; it's the truth," reiterated the girl earnestly.

"You went into my house and took that model by force," continued the young machinist. "You see, I know all about it, so you might as well give up the thing at once."

While speaking, Jack had unconsciously stepped to one side. With a sudden movement Corrigan slipped past him, and made for the open door.

But the young machinist was on the alert, and before the man could realize it, he was sprawling on the floor, with Jack on top of him.

By intuition, he appeared to feel that it would be useless to struggle, and so lay perfectly still.

"I've a good mind to bind you, hands and feet," said Jack. "Close that door, will you, Mont?" he added to his friend.

"Will you let me go if I give up the model?" panted Corrigan, who began to feel the weight of Jack's heavy body upon his chest.

"I don't know. But you've got to give it up, anyway."

"I suppose it's hidden here," put in Mont. "That's probably the reason he's hanging around the place."

"Wherever it is you will never find it without being told," broke in Corrigan.

For well-known reasons he was anxious to get away.

"Oh, let him go, Jack!" exclaimed Deb. "I don't care, now I've got you--and Mont"--the last words with a grateful look at the young man, that caused him to blush. Jack thought the matter over carefully. He was not of a vindictive nature, and bore no personal ill-will against Corrigan.

"What do you think of it?" he whispered to Mont.

"Might as well let him go if he gives up your property," replied the young man. "It would be rather hard for us to manage him."

"Then give up the model and you can leave," said the young machinist to Corrigan. "But I never want you to come around me again."

"Give me your word on letting me go if I give it up?" asked the man, with an eager look.

"Yes."

"Come on, then."

Corrigan led the way to the upper room of the mill. The little party of three entered.

"There it is," said the man, pointing to a corner; "you will find it up there, back of that large beam," and he pointed to an angle in the roof, about eight feet from the floor.

"Give me a boost up, Mont," exclaimed Jack.

The young man caught him by the hips, and held him up as best he could.

"It's here, sure enough!" cried the young machinist, and from out of a dim recess he brought forth the model, covered with dust and cobwebs.

So interested were the two that they did not notice Corrigan back out from the room and close the door behind him.

"I'm glad it's safe!" exclaimed Jack, as he placed the precious burden upon the floor.

"I was afraid--Hello--what's that?"

The creak of a bolt not used before sounded in his ears, and in an instant he noticed the closed door.

"He's gone!" ejaculated Mont, in astonishment.

The young machinist sprang to the door and shook it vainly.

"Trapped, by Jinks!" he exclaimed. "Here, quick! we'll break it down!"

With all force both threw themselves against the wooden barrier.

Unfortunately the door was an old-fashioned one, thick and solid, and it stood firm.

"We're caged and no mistake!" cried the young man, nearly breathless from his repeated exertions. "Hist! Listen!"

Pale as a sheet, Jack did as bidden.

There was a struggle going on below. They heard Deb shriek several times.

"Great heavens, what is he doing?" continued Mont.

"We must get out," exclaimed Jack determinedly.

"Now! One, two, three!"

Bang!

The door groaned. It bent out at the bottom, but still held its own.

"Try it again! Now!"

Bang! Crash!

A thin split through one of the panels, but that was all. Jack jumped over to the model.

"What are you going to do?" asked Mont, perplexed.

"Cut our way out," was the reply.

Taking a small screwdriver from his pocket, the young machinist loosened one of the sharp knives of the miniature planer. As he did so there came a scream from beyond the road.

Jack was again back to the door. How rapidly the chips flew! Hurrah! he had made a hole through!

He put in his finger.

"Can you reach the bolt?" asked the young man anxiously.

"Not quite!"

Again the chips flew. The hole grew larger.

"Here, Mont, try your hand. It's smaller than mine."

The young man did so. With a painful squeeze he pushed through the opening, and catching the bolt by his thumb, drew it back.

Jack then opened the door, and rushing out, jumped down the steps four at a time.

"Come on!" he called back to Mont, who was vainly endeavoring to release his hand. "I think he's gone down the road."

The young machinist was not long in reaching the outside. But once there he came to a full stop.

Neither his sister nor Corrigan were anywhere to be seen!

In a few seconds Mont appeared, the back of his hand bleeding from the scratch it had received.

"Where are they?" he gasped, tying his handkerchief over the wound.

"Blessed if I know!" exclaimed Jack.

He ran to a bend in the road, and then back again. Not a soul to be seen anywhere!

Meanwhile, the young man examined the river bank. All was quiet and undisturbed. The sun had set fully an hour before, and the twilight, especially under the trees, was fast deepening.

"We can't trace them in the dark," remarked Mont, as they stopped for consideration.

"We've got to do it," declared the young machinist; "I'm going to find Deb if it takes a week."

"Then I'm with you, Jack. Come on."

"It runs in my mind that they must have taken that road," said Jack, as he

pointed to the one that led down the river.

"Well, we might as well take that as any other," returned Mont. "He must certainly have carried her in his arms, and--well, I declare! Isn't that her hair ribbon?" and he picked up a streamer of brown from the road-side.

Jack examined it.

"You're right," he replied, "We are on the direct way to overtake them. Come!"

Both started on a run. They soon passed the falls, and came to a clear spot on the bank of the river.

Mont uttered a cry.

"Look! Look!" he exclaimed, pointing out in mid-stream. "There they are in a boat; Corrigan is making for Blackbird Island!"

CHAPTER XXII.

HEAPS OF MONEY

Mont was right. Far out on the fast-darkening waters of the stream was a small rowboat, with Corrigan at the oars, and poor Deb huddled up on the stern seat.

Jack's heart sank within him.

"He's out of reach," he groaned. "Oh, what fools we were to let him dupe us at the mill."

"I suppose he was afraid to trust us to let him go," said the young man. "Can't we do something?" he asked, disconsolately, as he stepped to the top of a rock to get a better view.

"Come down!" cried Jack, pulling him by the coat. "It's no use letting him know that we have tracked him so far, or he'll do his best to mislead us."

"That is so," returned the young man, and he hurried into shelter. "I suppose he intends to join Mosey and Pooler."

"It's a good thing he didn't know we had been to the island," said Jack. "Suppose we take Meg's boat and follow?" he added, suddenly.

"We would never be able to cope with those three men. If we had arms it might be different. But we haven't as much as a toy pistol."

"Never mind, I'm going," was Jack's reply, and he made for the cove where the craft had been left.

"Then I'm with you," Mont returned, and he followed.

At the water's edge both gave a cry of disappointment.

The boat was gone!

"Of course, Corrigan took it," said the young machinist. "He knew this was the place to look for Pooler's boat."

Mont shook his head dubiously.

"I guess you're right. What's to be done now?" he asked, slowly.

Jack cudgeled his brain for an instant.

"I'll look around. There must be other boats. Of course we haven't any right to take them, but we can't stand on ceremony in a case like this."

He ran down the beach and soon came to a tiny craft tied to a fallen tree.

"Just the thing," he exclaimed, untying the boat and jumping in. "Tell you what to do, Mont. I'll row out and keep them in sight, while you run over to Farmer Farrell's for assistance. Get him to come, and other help, too, if you can, and row directly for the landing. If you don't find me there, fire a pistol shot, and I'll come as soon as I can."

This hurried arrangement was agreed upon, and Mont made for the lane that led to the farmer's homestead.

Jack shipped the oars, and tired as he was, pulled manfully out into the stream. The other boat was no longer in view, but he had carefully noted the direction it had taken, and now headed exactly the same way.

He pulled for five minutes or more, and then looked ahead.

He was chagrined to find that the other craft was still out of sight.

Resuming his seat, he redoubled his efforts, sending the spray flying in all directions.

Presently the island loomed up before him, and straining his eyes, he sought for some signs of his sister and her abductor.

But though he looked in all directions, and even rowed a considerable distance up and down the irregular shore, not a thing was revealed.

"Well, I'm stumped!" was his rather slangy but forcible exclamation. "I'm positive they're not far off, and how I can be slipped in this fashion gets me! Wonder if he has gone up to the cottage?"

Jack ran the boat up the beach and landed. It was now very dark, and he had no little difficulty in finding the right direction.

Finally he struck the path, and three minutes' walk brought him to the clearing. A bright light was burning in the cottage living-room, and cautiously approaching one of the side windows, he peeped in.

At the table, his head nodding sleepily, sat Mosey, with a glass and bottle close at hand.

"He must be alone," thought the young machinist. "Wonder where Pooler is?"

In his disappointment, he was about to return to the shore, when the door leading to the garret stairway opened, and Corrigan appeared.

He did not utter a word, but closing the door behind him, he locked it carefully.

Jack was pleased to see him. He instantly surmised that Deb had been brought to the place, and was at the present instant probably locked up in the room above.

He was bound to rescue her at all hazards, and looked around for some available weapon with which to defend himself if the occasion required.

A small axe lay near the doorstep, and he picked it up. It was ah ugly looking thing, and he felt better when he had it where it could be brought into instant use. Both of the men were desperate characters--one of them had tried to take his life--and he was resolved to run no more risks.

"Oi suppose we can't go back to Corney any more," remarked Mosey, as he took the bottle and helped himself freely. "Ye'll be up fer stealin' and----"

"You'll be up for something worse," finished Corrigan, with a forced laugh. "You're right, Andy. The place is getting too hot to hold us. We'll have to clear out soon, I'm afraid. Where is Max?"

"Gone to the cave."

"What for?"

"Oi don't know, leastwise he thinks Oi don't."

"Which means that you do," remarked Corrigan, suggestively.

Mosey unclosed one eye with great deliberation.

"Oi do that," he replied slowly.

"Do you think it's money, Andy?" asked the other, as he seated himself on the edge of the table.

"It's not anything else, Dennis, me b'y," was the reply.

"How much do you expect to get from him?"

"Not one cint. Oh, but he's a close-fisted miser. Oi know him!" and the Irishman rubbed his chin savagely. "He owes me many a dollar, so he does!"

"Suppose we take what we ought to have by force," whispered Corrigan. He was slightly pale and his lips twitched nervously.

"Oi'm wid ye," replied Mosey, rising to his feet. "Oi was thinkin' of the same thing myself. Max is no good any more. Come on!"

With an uncertain step the Irishman moved toward the door. In an instant Jack stepped behind the opposite side of the building.

Corrigan followed his brother-in-law out, and both walked toward the woods on the right.

The young machinist watched them out of sight and then ran into the cottage.

Unlocking the stairway door, he mounted the steps hastily.

"Deb! Deb!"

"Oh, Jack! is that you?" came a voice from the darkness.

"Yes. Where are you?"

"Here, over here, this way!"

Groping his way along the rafters, the young machinist soon held his sister in his arms. In a trice he cut the straps with which Corrigan had bound her.

"Are you hurt?" he asked tenderly.

"Oh, no, but I was awfully frightened!" declared the girl. She was trembling like a frightened fawn, and clung to him closely as he carried her down the ladder and into the open air.

"We'll go over to the shore," said Jack; "I think Mont is there. He was to follow me."

When they reached the edge of the water, they found that the young man had just landed. He was accompanied by Farmer Farrell, one of the hired men, and Meg, who had insisted upon coming along to show the way.

In a few words Jack introduced Deb, and related what had occurred.

"And now I believe these men mean harm to this Max Pooler," he said in conclusion. "If I knew the way to the cave I'd follow them at once."

"I know the way," put in Meg. "Pooler thinks I don't, but I found it out one rainy night by followin' him."

"And will you show us?" asked Jack, eagerly.

"Yep, if you want me to," replied the young girl. "Come on. 'Taint far."

"Hurry up, then. I have a feeling that every minute is valuable."

Meg led off at once, Jack and Mont following first, with Farmer Farrell close behind, and Deb helped along by the hired man, who lagged considerably, having no desire to expose himself to possible harm.

"'Taint very pleasant," said Meg, as they journeyed over rocks and stumps, and through a copse of thick undergrowth, and then over a shallow stream.

Quarter of a mile brought them to a ravine, near the center of the island.

"Here we are!" exclaimed the young girl. "There's the mouth of the cave."

She pointed to a huge rock, split directly in the center. Without an instant's hesitation, Jack entered, followed by the rest.

Bang!

A pistol shot rang out ahead!

"They've shot him, sure?" exclaimed the young machinist, darting forward.

A turn in the passage brought him to a small square chamber hollowed out of the rock, and furnished with a table and two chairs.

He was utterly bewildered by the scene before him.

On either side of the small opening stood Mosey and Corrigan, the former

with a smoking pistol in his hand. Between them lay Max Pooler, a wound in his shoulder.

But the scene upon the floor of the cave was what riveted Jack's attention. There, scattered in every direction, were gold and silver coins, amounting to many thousands of dollars.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MISER'S TREASURE

As he stood in the cave on Blackbird Island, Jack thought he must be dreaming--the smoke and shining gold and silver all dancing before his eyes.

Mechanically he moved forward and grasped hold of the pistol in Mosey's hand. The Irishman was so astonished that he relinquished the weapon without an effort.

"Stand right where you are!" commanded Jack, and he pointed the pistol so that it was nearly in range of both men.

"Cornered!" cried Corrigan, as he looked toward the cave entrance, now blocked by Farmer Farrell and his hired man, "and at the last minute, too."

Meanwhile, Mont had gone down on his knees, and was bending over the prostrate form of Max Pooler, who was bleeding profusely from the wound in his shoulder.

Picking up one of the heavy cloth bags that had contained a part of the scattered coin, the young man clapped it hastily over the bleeding spot, tying it in position with his handkerchief--an action which checked the flow considerably.

"My gold! My precious gold and silver," shrieked Pooler, never deigning to notice the effect of Mosey's hasty shot. "Put it back; put it back in the bags! Oh, don't let them take it! It's mine! All mine!" he whined.

"Never mind," put in Jack. "Don't worry. What's yours shall remain yours. Guess we have them safe, eh, Mr. Farrell?" he continued.

"Looks so," replied the sturdy farmer. "Anyway, I reckon I can keep 'em from going through this door--the pesky critters!" and, with his gun ready for use, the farmer stationed himself in the middle of the passageway, with Deb, Meg and the hired man behind him.

"What's the cause of this row?" asked Jack, hardly knowing how to proceed, the whole affair having happened so unexpectedly.

He looked at Corrigan and then at Mosey, but both of these discomfited individuals remained silent.

"They were trying to rob me of my gold and silver," cried Pooler, "But they sha'n't do it!" he added, vehemently. "It's mine, all mine."

With his restless eyes rolling wildly, the miser--for Max Pooler was naught else--reached out his uninjured arm, and clutching the pieces of money within reach, stowed them away in his bosom.

"Better keep quiet," suggested Mont, placing his hand on the bandaged shoulder. "Your wound may be more serious than you think."

Max Pooler started.

"Do you--you think so?" he asked in a hoarse whisper.

"Not being a doctor, I can't say anything certain. It depends on what direction the bullet took."

"Can I do anything?" put in Deb at this juncture. She had pushed her way past the farmer, and now stood by the young man's side.

"I guess not, Deb," Mont replied. "We haven't much at hand in the shape of hospital supplies," he added, soberly.

"Suppose we try to get him up to the house," suggested Farmer Farrell, without removing his eyes from the two who had caused all the mischief.

"I won't leave my gold and silver!" howled the miser. "Leave me here. Never mind my arm; it will soon get well. Only take those two men away."

Max Pooler struggled to his feet. The movement caused him intense pain, and he uttered a sharp groan.

"We can't do as he wishes," said Jack to Mont. "He might die, and we would never forgive ourselves."

"I know it," replied the other. "But it will be a hard matter to separate him from his money. Besides what shall we do with Mosey and Corrigan?"

"That's a sticker. If we had a rope I 'd bind them tighter than they ever bound me."

"There's a rope in that chest," put in the miser, who overheard the last remark. "Tie 'em up--don't let 'em get away."

"It's sorry ye'll be for sayin' that," exclaimed Mosey. "Oi'll tell--hic--all----"

Corrigan caught him by the arm.

"Shut up!" he whispered in his ear. "Can't you see Max is excited? Let him cool down. You will be getting us into a heap of trouble presently."

The rope in the chest was long and heavy, and Jack picked it up with considerable satisfaction.

"You first, Mosey," he said, "and none of your fooling, mind."

"That's all roight, Jack, me b'y. Oi'll not run a shtep. Never--hic--moind the rope," returned the Irishman in his oiliest tones.

"I won't trust you, Mosey," returned the young machinist firmly; and, assisted by Mont, he tied the man's hands behind him, and his feet in such a manner that he could barely take a walking step.

"Now your turn," said Jack to Corrigan.

"What are you going to tie me for?" asked that individual in pretended surprise. "I didn't shoot him."

"Perhaps not, but you were perfectly willing to have him shot. Come, quick. I'm not going to argue all night."

Corrigan saw that Jack's patience was exhausted, and that the young machinist was not to be trifled with. He submitted without another word.

"Well, what's to do now," asked Farmer Farrell, when the job was finished.

"Suppose we row them over to the mainland and march them to Corney," suggested Jack. "It's half-past eight now. We can reach there by ten."

"I'll get my wagon, and we can drive over," returned the farmer. "But what of this man here? We can't leave him."

"Carry him up to the cottage," put in Meg, who had thus far been a silent spectator of what was passing. "There's medicine there, lots of it. It came from----"

Max Pooler glared at the girl.

"Shut up, will you?" he snarled. "How many times have I got to tell you to make you mind?"

"You can say what you please," replied the girl boldly, "and I will, too. I've left the island for good, and don't care what you do."

The miser turned pale with rage.

"What!" he cried, harshly. "Leave me! Why, you good for nothin'----"

In his anger he raised his wounded arm as if to strike. Jack sprang forward to defend the young girl.

But his caution was unnecessary, for at the same instant Max Pooler gave a sharp gasp of pain, and wavering backward and forward for a second, fell heavily to the floor.

Deb and Meg both gave a shriek, Jack and Mont turned the wounded man over on his back.

"Is he--he dead?" asked Deb. She was white, and trembled all over.

"No, only exhausted," replied Mont, after applying his ear to the miser's breast. "His passions hold him completely under control."

"Then he is to be more pitied than blamed," said the girl, sympathetically.

The wound had again commenced to bleed. Mont adjusted the bandage that had become displaced, but this seemed to do little good.

"I will run to the cottage, and get anything you want," put in Meg, gazing with softened features at the unconscious form.

"All right," replied Mont, and he named several things which he thought

might be used to advantage. "And don't forget plenty of linen, and some cotton if you have it," he added.

The young girl started off at once, and soon disappeared in the darkness.

Meanwhile the two prisoners were growing restless.

"Guess me and the man can march the pesky critters down to the boat," said Farmer Farrell, who was weary of watching the pair. "That is, if you don't mind going through the woods with us," he continued to Jack.

"Certainly, I'll go," answered the young machinist. "Will you stay here, Deb?"

"Yes, I may be needed," replied the girl. "We'll have to dress the shoulder when Meg returns."

A moment later the party started off, Mosey and Corrigan in the center, with the hired man behind.

Hardly had they left ere Max Pooler returned to his senses, and sitting up, suddenly looked around.

"Gone?" he ejaculated. "Did they leave my money? Did they leave me my shining gold and silver?"

"Yes, it's all there, so don't worry," replied Mont gently. "You must keep quiet; it is bad for your shoulder when you move."

Max Pooler lay back, and eyed the young man suspiciously.

"You talk as if you meant well," he said, "but no one can be trusted nowadays. Who are you?"

"Oh, never mind that," replied the young man, "just keep quiet."

"But I want to know your name," persisted the wounded man.

"My name is Monterey Gray."

The miser leaped to his feet, his teeth clenched, and his eyes rolling frightfully.

"It's a lie!" he shrieked. "Monterey Gray is dead!--died years ago! He died on the yacht! I saw him. Oh, you can't fool me! His ghost is in the falls, but he is dead; and his gold and silver--oh, you can't fool me! This ain't his; it's mine, all mine!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

A GLIMPSE OF THE PAST

The miser's wild and unexpected revelation was certainly a most astonishing thing to Mont Gray. As we know, he had surmised that this strange man knew much of the history of the past, and he had already decided to put several questions to Max Pooler on the first available opportunity. But such a statement as he had just heard took away his breath, and he stared at the prostrate man, scarcely able to move.

Deb, too, was astonished, but, woman-like, paid more attention to the effect upon the young man than to what was said.

"Oh, Mont, isn't it awful?" she exclaimed, catching him by the arm. "What makes you so pale? What is that man talking about?"

"I can't say, exactly," he replied, in an oddly unnatural voice. "My father's death is a mystery to me. This man can unravel it, I suppose, if he will," he added, as he knelt down, and turned Pooler once more on his back.

The face of the wounded man had lost all color, and his heart seemed to have stopped beating.

"If we only had some water it might help him," said Mont. "Although I can't make anything out of a case like this."

"There's a brook just outside," returned Deb. "Wonder if there is a cup anywhere around?"

In one corner he found a can, such as is used in preserving vegetables. It was empty, and, taking it outside, she washed it thoroughly, and returned with it full of pure, cold water, with which they bathed the wounded man's head.

"He is suffering more from the excitement than from the pistol shot," observed the young man, as he worked away.

"I suppose being surprised by those two men was the start of it," replied Deb.

The miser was rapidly regaining his color, and his forehead felt like fire. Soaking the handkerchief in the can, the girl bound it over his temples.

Presently Pooler grew restless. He did not open his eyes, but moved his body from side to side uneasily.

"He is coming to," whispered Mont. "Perhaps you had better go outside. He may become violent."

"Never mind if he does," replied the girl; "I think I ought to stay, and I won't care so long as you are here," and then, as Mont gave her a grateful smile, Deb suddenly blushed and turned away her face.

"My gold and silver! It's mine, all mine!" muttered Pooler to himself. "Monterey Gray is dead, and it belongs to me, all, all, all!" He gnashed his teeth. "Oh, why did I go on that accursed yacht--evil is always sure to follow! My gold and silver! All mine!"

A long silence followed, broken only by the irregular breathing of the exhausted man.

"He has passed into a stupor," said Mont. "How long it will last I cannot tell."

Presently Meg returned, carrying a number of bottles and bandages.

"Brought all I could carry," she declared. "Hope there's what you want there."

Deb looked over the list and fixed up a dose which Mont poured down the wounded man's throat.

Meanwhile, Meg picked up the scattered coins and tied them up in the various bags that lay upon the table. How much there was they could form no estimate, but it would certainly run up to thousands of dollars.

Evidently, Max Pooler had not dreamed of being surprised while counting over his hoarded wealth, and the demands of Mosey and Corrigan, who probably had some hold upon the miser, had led to an immediate quarrel.

While Meg was still at work, Jack returned, somewhat flushed from hurrying.

"We don't know what to do with those two men," he said, after taking a look at Pooler, who still rested quietly. "That hired man is afraid of his own shadow, and Mr. Farrell hardly thinks he can manage them alone."

"Suppose you go with them," suggested Mont. "I can get along here alone, and when you come back you can bring a doctor."

The young man's idea was thought by all to be a good one.

"But what will you do?" asked the young machinist of his sister.

"I'll do whatever you say, Jack," was Deb's reply.

"I'll stay here, if it's best," put in Meg. "I ain't afraid of anything on this island."

"Perhaps you had better remain, too, Deb," said Jack. "I'll be back with the doctor just as soon as I can."

"Wonder if we can't get this man up to the cottage," put in Mont. "He'd be much better off in his own bed than here."

"We can, but carrying may make his wound worse," returned the young machinist.

"It isn't that which worries him the most. It's his money and his conscience," declared the young man, as he eyed Pooler meditatively.

"Then come; we'll lock hands and make an armchair for him to ride in."

Not without considerable difficulty they raised the man between them. He now uttered no sound, and his weight was that of a dead body.

Meg led the way, carrying the lantern which she had taken from the cave. Deb brought up the rear, her overskirt weighted down by as many of the bags of the coin as she could carry, which Jack advised should be taken along.

It was a long and tedious walk, for the greater part in the dark. They rested twice, and both Mont and Jack gave a sigh of relief when they deposited their burden upon a temporary bed in the front room of the cottage.

"There, now you'll have to get along the best you can," said the young machinist. "I suppose Mr. Farrell is wondering what keeps me so long. Good night all;" and off he went toward the shore.

Meg brought some extra blankets from the other beds, and Mont prepared a resting place for the unconscious man, placing the wounded shoulder in as comfortable a position as possible.

"You had both better try to secure a little sleep," he said to the two girls. "I can get along alone. If I need help I will call you."

After some discussion both Deb and Meg retired to what had for many years been the latter's resting place, a small chamber at one end of the garret.

Mont kept a constant eye upon his strange patient, frequently rearranging the pillow, and watching that the bandage did not slip from the shoulder.

There was an anxious look in the young man's face as he moved about, and it soon vented itself in a brief soliloquy.

"This man knows all about the past," he whispered to himself. "He knew my father, and he knows uncle Felix, I must help him to recover and, there----" he rubbed his hand over his forehead; "If I only knew the truth!"

He noticed that the brow of the miser gradually grew hotter, and that the man's restlessness increased every moment.

"I don't know of anything else I can do," said Mont to himself. "I hope Jack will hurry back with the doctor."

It was not long before Max Pooler was tossing from side to side.

"My gold and silver," murmured the feverish miser. "My shining gold and silver! You shan't take it away! It's mine. Ask Felix Gray if it ain't."

Mont started.

"What did you say?" he asked bending low over the tossing form.

"Water, water!" moaned Pooler, paying no attention to the question. "Give me a drink of water, I'm burning up!"

Mont took up the pitcher which Meg had filled at the spring, and held it to his lips. The miser took one sip, and then pushed it from him.

"Ha! ha! you can't fool me!" he screamed. "You're in the water--the same old face! Haven't I looked at it many a time from the deck of the Kitty? But you're dead, yes dead, and you can't tell anything!" and he fell back on the bed with a groan.

"You must keep quiet," said Mont, who, to tell the truth, was highly excited himself; "you are wounded in the shoulder, and will fare badly if you don't take things easy."

But Pooler either could or would not pay any attention to Mont's advice. He kept muttering to himself--at one moment apparently in his right mind and at the next talking at random.

"Who did you say you were?" he asked during a lucid interval.

The young man did not reply. He knew that under the circumstances to do so would only excite the man.

"Oh, I know--Monterey Gray. But you're not. Monterey Gray is dead," and the miser chuckled.

"You are thinking of my father," said Mont finally.

Max Pooler glared at him.

"'Tain't so!" he cried, and then, after a pause: "Who was that other young man?"

"My friend, Jack Willington."

"Willington!" gasped Pooler, rising up. "Both of them; and they have come to take away the money! But Monterey Gray and Martin Willington are both dead, and the gold and silver is mine! Didn't I tell you so before? It is all mine!"

CHAPTER XXV.

CHASING ANDY MOSEY

Jack's thoughts were busy as he hurried toward the shore, where he expected to meet farmer Farrell and the two prisoners.

"Pooler acts mighty queer to say the least," he told himself. "I can't make it out at all, excepting that I think we are on the edge of some discovery of importance."

It was dark under the trees, and he had to pick his way along as best he could. Once he lost the path and came close to running into a small brook flowing halfway across the island.

Never for a moment did he imagine that either of the two prisoners could get away from the farmer and his hired man.

But in this he was mistaken.

Corrigan was too tightly bound to help himself, but not so Andy Mosey. The Irishman had been so near complete intoxication that it had not been deemed necessary to make his bonds extra strong.

But finding himself a close prisoner had sobered Mosey a good deal and long before the shore was gained he made up his mind to escape if he possibly could.

With a cunning that he had heretofore failed to exhibit he began to act as if

he was more intoxicated than usual.

"Look out, or you'll go down!" was the warning of the farmer. "And if you do go down you can pick yourself up, for I shan't help you, excepting with a kick."

"Oi know me way," was Mosey's unsteady reply. "Oi'm comin'. Don't ye worry about me."

Just as the vicinity of the shore was gained Mosey slipped the bonds from first one hand and then the other, taking care that not even his brother-in-law should see him, for he was now thinking of saving himself only.

"Come, don't drag," came from farmer Farrell. "I am not going to stay here all night."

"Sure, an' Oi sthepped in a hole, the ould b'y take the luck!" spluttered Mosey. "Oi'm comin' jhust as fast as Oi can!"

The farmer moved on and so did Corrigan and the hired man. Farmer Farrell had cautioned the hired man to keep an eye on Mosey, but the job was not at all to the fellow's taste and he was thinking of nothing but to get back home, where he had left a comfortable bed in the barn.

At last Mosey thought he saw his opportunity and dropped further behind than ever, acting as if he had lamed his foot. Then of a sudden he darted behind some trees and crashed away through some bushes.

"Hi! stop!" roared farmer Farrell. "Stop, or I'll fire on you!"

To this Andy Mosey made no reply, but increased his speed, so that he was soon quite a distance from the island shore. The farmer gazed around in dismay, first at Corrigan and then at his hired man.

"Go after him, you dunce!" he cried to the hired man. "I must watch this rascal. Didn't I tell you to keep an eye on the other fellow?"

"And I did, sir," was the weak answer. "He ran off before I knew it."

"Well, after him, I say! Don't stand there like a block of wood!"

"He--he may take it into his head to shoot me," faltered the hired man.

"He hasn't any pistol, we disarmed him," returned the farmer, frantically. "Are you going after him or not?"

"I'll go, sir," said the hired man, and hurried off as far as the bushes into which Mosey had first disappeared. But by that time the Irishman was a good hundred yards away, and running as rapidly as his limbs would carry him.

In the bushes the hired man came to a halt. He pretended to look around, but he did not venture a step further.

"Do you see him?" called out farmer Farrell.

"No, sir."

"Why don't you follow him up?"

"I don't know where he went to."

"He went up the shore. Quick, follow him, or I'll discharge you to-morrow

morning."

Thus threatened the hired man started up the shore and then moved in the direction of the cottage, having a notion that Mosey might move in that direction, although he might have known better. A minute later he heard footsteps and came to a halt with his heart in his throat.

"If he attacks me I'm a goner!" he groaned, and then saw that it was Jack and not Mosey who was approaching.

"O, sir, he's got away!" he cried, with a feeling of relief when he recognized the young machinist.

"Got away? Who?" questioned Jack, quickly.

"The rascal named Mosey."

"When?"

"Just a few minutes ago, sir--when we were almost to the boat."

"What of Corrigan?"

"Mr. Farrell is watching him."

"But Mosey was bound?"

"I know it, sir. But he got away anyhow, and ran like a deer up the shore."

"Then he can't be far off," exclaimed Jack. "Were you after him?"

"Yes, sir."

"But if he went up the shore----"

"I was a-thinking he might turn toward the cottage."

"No, he didn't come this way."

"Then he must have gone that way."

"We must catch him," cried Jack, earnestly. "He has done too many wrong deeds to be allowed to escape in this fashion. Come on, follow me."

The young inventor pushed forward and the hired man came after him, but at what he considered a safe distance in the rear. Soon Jack was running up the shore at a point where there was a wide open field, which Pooler had once used for growing wheat.

As the young machinist came out on the edge of the field he saw a dark form just leaving the open space at the opposite side. The form was that of Mosey.

"Stop, Mosey!" he cried, loudly. "Stop, it will be best for you!"

The cry from Jack alarmed Andy Mosey more than ever, and he tried to run with increased speed. But his first burst had been almost too much for him, and he was panting loudly for breath.

"Sure an' Oi can't make it afther all," he panted. "Bad cess to Jack Willington fer followin' me! Oi wisht Oi had me pistol. Oi'd soon be afther sthopin' his game!"

But Mosey had nothing more than a sharp stone, which he had picked up in the field, and at present he saw no way of using this, for Jack was too far off.

Feeling that he could not run much further, he looked around for some place

where he might hide. A gnarled tree with low-spreading branches was not far away and to this he went and began to climb the trunk with all possible speed. Soon he was some distance from the ground and then he stretched himself on a limb and remained quiet.

Crossing the field at his best speed, Jack darted in among the trees and peered around sharply. Of course he could see nothing of Mosey, and he moved on for a distance of a hundred feet or more. Then he came back and stood directly under the tree in which the Irishman was hiding. In the meantime the farmer's hired man came to a halt in the middle of the field, ready to run at the first sign of danger.

"Mosey!" called Jack. "Mosey, you might as well give yourself up. You are bound to be caught sooner or later."

He listened, but no reply came back. Then Jack walked around the tree.

Now had the Irishman kept quiet he might have escaped the young inventor, but his success at getting away made him extra bold, and not knowing that the farm hand was near he resolved to do Jack a great injury. Bringing the sharp stone from his pocket, he took careful aim at Jack's head and let drive with all the force he could command.

Had the stone landed as intended the young inventor might have been killed, but as it was, on the instant that Mosey threw the missile Jack took a step forward, thinking to go on another hunt for the Irishman. Consequently the stone merely grazed his shoulder, doing hardly any damage.

Much startled, Jack leaped forward and then turned around. He did not know exactly where Mosey was, but resolved to put on a bold front.

"So that is where you are!" he cried. "Do you want me to put a bullet through you?"

"Bad luck to yez!" growled Mosey, much crestfallen. "No, don't shoot me, Jack, me b'y. It--it was all a mistake. I thought ye was the farmer, upon me wurrud."

"Do you surrender?"

"Yis, yis!" Andy Mosey had a wholesome fear of being shot, and he could not see whether Jack had a pistol or not.

"How many more rocks have you up there?"

"Nary a wan, Jack, Oi only had the wan, upon me honor."

"Then jump down here, and hold your hands over your head. If you try to play me another trick I'll shoot you sure."

With a groan Andy Mosey descended to the ground, and then held his hands over his head.

"Now turn around and march the way you came. And don't you dare to look back," continued the young inventor.

"But, Jack, me dear b'y----"

"I am not your dear boy, Mosey, and I won't stop to parley with you."

"But, Jack, I didn't----"

"Stop it I say, and march. Or do you want to be in the fix Pooler is in?"

"No, no! I'll march, Jack; don't shoot!" And without further ado Andy Mosey set off for the shore, with Jack behind him, and the farm hand bringing up at a safe distance to one side. Presently the farm hand ran ahead, to tell farmer Farrell of how matters now stood.

As soon as the hired man had disappeared Andy Mosey tried to argue again.

"It's Corrigan's doin's----" he began.

"Mosey, we won't talk now," said Jack at last, for he saw that the Irishman's head was not as clear as it might have been. "If you want to argue you can do it when we are in the boat."

"But you'll be afther listenin' to me Jack, me b'y?" pleaded Mosey.

"Perhaps."

"I want to be friends wid ye."

"You have a strange way of showing it."

"It's the liquor, Jack, me b'y--bad cess to it."

"Why don't you leave liquor alone then, Andy?"

"Sure, an' it would be a good job done if I had niver touched a drap."

"You've spoken the truth there."

"If Oi iver git out av this hole Oi'll soign the pledge, so Oi will."

"You might do worse."

"Say the wurrud, Jack, me b'y, an' Oi'll soign it to-morrow," went on Mosey, thinking he was winning the young inventor over.

"I'll say nothing more at present, Andy, excepting that I want you to get along to the shore, without further delay."

"But Jack, if Oi----"

"Not another word. March!"

And then the march to the boat was resumed.

CHAPTER XXVI.

PAPERS OF GREAT VALUE

It did not take Jack and Mosey very long to reach the shore. They found Farmer Farrell, gun in hand, stalking up and down impatiently. He had ordered Corrigan

into the row-boat, and was lecturing him and the hired man at the same time.

"You've been a mighty long while coming," he remarked, as the dim rays of the smoky lantern fell upon the young machinist's face.

"I couldn't help it," replied Jack, and he briefly related what had occurred to detain him so long.

They embarked at once. The young machinist set out to do the rowing, but was stopped by the farmer, who directed Tim, the hired man to take the oars.

"You're tired enough," said Farmer Farrell. "Besides, we must keep a close eye on these two, or they'll be up to their pesky tricks afore we know it."

Tim pulled a good stroke. He was anxious to get out of such dangerous company and be safe in his bed in the barn loft once more.

"Isn't there some way we can fix this matter up?" asked Corrigan, after a long period of thoughtful silence.

"What do you mean?" asked Jack.

"Why, buy ourselves off."

"No, sir, not a bit of it," returned the young machinist, decidedly.

Corrigan winced. The prospect of going to prison was not a particularly inviting one.

"Oi say, Jack, me b'y, if we give up yer model will ye be easy on us?" put in Mosey, who did not know that that precious bit of property had already been recovered.

"I have it already," replied Jack; "I don't intend to be any harder on you than you deserve," he continued. "You tried to take my friend's life as well as mine, and also to set fire to Mr. Gray's house, and by using the match-safe which belonged to me, cast suspicion on my character, which has not yet been cleared away."

"Who can prove I set foire to Felix Gray's place?" demanded the Irishman, blusteringly. His tongue was clearer than it had been, but his head was as muddled as ever.

"Perhaps I can."

"Ye can't, no how."

"Well, we'll see, and it will go hard with you unless you can prove otherwise."

"Oi didn't do it. It was Dennis's work," howled Mosey, breaking down completely. "Oi found the box and gave it ter him, and he kept it. Didn't he stale the model, too, and run away wid yer sister? Oi niver harmed a soul, save when I was in liquor," he whined.

"It's a lie!" shouted Corrigan, in a rage. Had he been free he would have struck down his confederate.

"It ain't, it's true, every worrud of it," responded Mosey, doggedly. "Ye always got me to do yer dirty worruk, and now yer want me to stand all der blame. But Oi won't do it. Oi'll turn Queen's evidence first."

"If you turn state's evidence you may save yourself a heap of trouble," put in Farmer Farrell.

"Oh, Oi'll do it, just mind me, if Oi don't," replied the Irishman, quickly. He was thoroughly cowed, and his one thought was how to best evade the clutches of the law.

"You mean dog!" interrupted Corrigan, bitterly. "You shall pay dearly for this;" and he grated his teeth together in rancor.

"I don't think you will be able to harm him for a good while," sagely remarked Farmer Farrell.

Corrigan became silent at once, and as each one was busy with his own thoughts, the rest of the trip was accomplished without further words.

On reaching the shore the party repaired at once to Farmer Farrell's place where Tim, glad to be home again, hitched up the team to the old family wagon.

"Is there a doctor anywhere near?" asked Jack; "I promised to send one over to the island."

"Dr. Melvin lives just up the road," replied the farmer. "We'll stop and tell him, and Tim can row him over. Do you hear, Tim?"

"Yes, sir," replied the farm hand. "To-morrow morning will do, I suppose."

"To-morrow morning!" repeated the farmer, in surprise. "No, indeed, right away. And if you can't get Dr. Melvin, go over to Dr. Dell's and take him straight to Pooler's cottage. Tell him that the man has a bullet in his shoulder."

Much as he disliked the job, the hired man did not dare to complain; so with a heavy sigh he set off on his errand, traveling through the dark as fast as his heavy boots would permit.

The family wagon contained two seats. Farmer Farrell took the front one, with Mosey beside him, while Jack, with Corrigan, sat in the rear, and then the horses were started on the road to Corney.

"We will stop at the old mill and get my model," said Jack, on the way.

At the old structure everything was dark and deserted.

"Say, Oi'll go along wid ye," said Mosey, as the young machinist dismounted from his seat. "There's something there Oi want to show ye."

Corrigan wished to interfere, but Jack, who believed that the Irishman was now really inclined to render assistance, would not let him.

"There are some papers that belong to Mr. Gray. Dennis stole them when the house was burning," said Mosey, when he and Jack were alone. "Oi can't read, but Dennis said they'd be worth money to us some day."

"Where are they?" asked Jack, with interest.

"Will you be aisy on me if Oi tell ye?" asked Mosey.

"Perhaps I will."

"Oi'll trust ye," replied Mosey. "They're up stairs, under the flure."

They ascended the stairs, and taking up a board that Mosey pointed out, Jack drew out a small, oblong packet.

"I can't read it now," said the young machinist. "Come along. If the contents are valuable I'll see that you get full credit for giving it up."

He put the packet in his pocket, and taking up the model, made the Irishman precede him down to the wagon. They were soon on the way again, the precious model safely stowed away in the front of the vehicle.

"I guess Mr. Benton will be rather surprised when he learns the true state of affairs," thought Jack to himself. "But his treatment of Deb was shameful, and I shall tell him so."

As they passed an old barn near the outskirts of the town all heard a loud cry, the scuffle of many feet, and then the door of the place burst open.

"Hello, what's all this?" exclaimed Jack. "Some one in trouble!"

Through the open doorway sprang a tall man. He was but partly dressed, and one side of his face bore a thick coating of black. He ran directly toward the road, and was followed by a dozen or more men wearing masks.

Seeing the wagon he made for it as fast as his legs would carry him.

"Save me, save me!" he gasped. "Get me away from these villains, and I will pay you well!" and in frantic haste he clambered over the wheel and into the front of the vehicle.

"What's the trouble!" asked Farmer Farrell in astonishment, while Jack took up the gun.

"They want to tar and feather me!" was the panting reply. "See they made a beginning;" and the excited individual held his face up to view.

"Mr. Gray!" ejaculated the young machinist.

He had not time to say more, for at that instant Corrigan, taking advantage of the excitement, hit Jack under the chin with his head, and then leaped to the ground. In doing so he fell, but picked himself up quickly, and hopped as fast as he could down the road.

A second later the wagon was surrounded by the masked men, all armed and gesticulating wildly.

"Give him up, Willington!" they yelled. "Give up Gray, or we'll tar and feather the lot of you!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

"LOVE YOUR ENEMIES"--CONCLUSION

It was a thrilling scene, the brawny men, their intended victim, the would-be rescuers, all in confusion.

One of the masked men attempted to pull Mr. Felix Gray to the ground, but the tool manufacturer held fast to the front seat.

"Stop that!" roared Farmer Farrell.

"We want that man!" called out a person in the mob.

"No, no! Save me! save me!" cried Mr. Gray, frantically.

"We will not give him up," exclaimed Jack. "It's a shame to treat a dog in this fashion!"

"He threw us out of work. He won't give us our money. He wants to starve us and our families," called out several.

"Listen!" yelled Jack, as loud as he could. "Some of you know me. I work in the tool works; I haven't got my money, and need it as badly as any of you. But I say you'll never gain anything by acting this way. Let Mr. Gray go."

"We want him and we're going to have him," exclaimed the man at the wagon, grimly, and he renewed his efforts to pull the tool manufacturer from the seat.

"You shall not," replied Jack, determinedly, and raising the gun, he hit the man a sharp blow upon the hand, which made him instantly release his hold.

"Go for 'em, fellows!" the man howled out, shaking the injured member in evident pain.

The crowd began instantly to close in upon the wagon. Mosey, in the excitement, tried his best to gain the ground, but Farmer Farrell had taken the precaution to tie the Irishman's feet fast to the iron foot rest, and he was unable to stir.

"We must get out of this!" exclaimed Jack to the farmer. "Start up the horses. Quick!"

Farmer Farrell needed no further urging. Reaching over Mr. Gray's body, he pulled up the reins, and struck first one and then the other of the horses with his whip.

With a bound the animals leaped forward. The man who had held a grip upon the tool manufacturer's foot lost it, and slipped under the vehicle--the hind wheel passing over his leg.

The crowd uttered a loud cry, but were too late to stop the sudden movement. One of the men caught hold of the tailboard of the wagon, but a threatening shake from the young machinist's gun made him drop to the ground.

On they went, Farmer Farrell making the horses do their very best.

Suddenly a pistol shot rang out, and Mosey gave a cry of pain.

"Oi'm shot!" he cried, falling backward upon Jack. "They've murdered me, so they have!"

"Where are you hit?" asked the young machinist anxiously.

"In the soide. Oi'm dy--in'----"

Another pistol shot interrupted his speech.

"Gitting kinder hot," cried the farmer. "Let me have the gun. Here, hold the reins," and he gave them to Jack and took the weapon. "We'll see what a dose of buckshot will do."

Bang!

The report was followed by several cries from behind.

"That'll teach the pesky critters a lesson," observed the farmer, as he resumed the reins.

Even as he spoke, they saw a flash in the darkness to one side of the road, followed instantly by the crack of a revolver.

"I'm struck!" exclaimed Mr. Gray. "The villain has hit me in the shoulder!"

"Is it bad?" asked Jack in horror.

"No, only a flesh wound, I guess," and the tool manufacturer drew a sharp breath. "Drive on, don't stop!"

The command was not needed. The team was now in full gallop, and three minutes brought them into the heart of the town.

"Straight home," replied Mr. Gray, in return to a question from Jack as to where he should be taken. "And bring Mosey along, the doctor can attend us both."

This was done, and the family physician pronounced the Irishman's wound quite serious.

"Yours will heal rapidly," he said to the tool manufacturer. "But your right arm will never be as good as it was. That workman may recover, but it will take months."

The sun was just rising when Jack, after a breakfast that Farmer Farrell's wife had compelled him to eat, took the boat and rowed over to Blackbird Island.

Deb saw him coming and rushed out of the cottage to meet him.

"Oh, Jack, such a time as we've had!" she sobbed. "The doctor is here, and that Pooler just died."

"Pooler dead?" ejaculated the young machinist, in amazement.

He entered the back room. The doctor and Meg were there, the girl's eyes swollen from crying.

"Where is Mont?" he asked.

Meg pointed to the other door.

"He's in there too," she said, in a quivering voice.

Jack entered the front chamber. Max Pooler's body lay on the cot, covered with a white sheet. Beside it, on a low stool, with his face buried in his hands, sat Mont.

The young man's countenance was full of emotion. He took the young ma-

chinist's hand in his own, and pulled the covering from the dead face before them.

"Listen, Jack," he said in a low voice, "I want to tell you an awful secret. Before this man died, he confessed that he murdered my father. He was very penitent, and he--he asked me to forgive him."

"And you----" began Jack.

"I did forgive him. It was hard, but how could I refuse a dying man?"

"You did right," returned the young machinist. "But, oh, Mont, I'm so sorry for you! Did he tell you how it came about?"

"Yes. He used to be my father's clerk, and avarice led him to steal. By some means he imagined my father knew of his doings, and was about to have him arrested. Half crazed by this fear, he went on board my father's yacht one night and cast her adrift while my father was sleeping in the stateroom. The yacht went over the falls, and turned up where we found her."

"And your father?"

"Was found dead in the cabin. He said my uncle suspected him, but as Mr. Felix Gray was trying to rob me of my share of the tool works property, he turned the tables, and threatened not only to expose him, but to implicate him in the murder as well. My uncle has been paying him money for years to keep him quiet, but part of this went to Mosey and Corrigan as 'hush money,' so Pooler said.

"It's a strange story," mused Jack.

"But that isn't all," continued Mont. "Before he died Pooler proved to me that about one-half of his treasure belonged really to you."

"To me!" ejaculated the young machinist, in utter astonishment.

Mont nodded.

"Yes, to you," he said. "Pooler said my father held it in trust for your father, who was not a good hand at investing money. The amounts were the proceeds of several valuable inventions."

"Then we are both rich," returned Jack, with a broad smile. "I am glad of it, for Deb's sake!" he added, brightly.

A little later the young machinist related what had happened on the river road the night before.

"And now we'll have the whole affair straightened out," he concluded. "I believe your uncle has had all the ups and downs he cares for, and will let you have your own without much opposition."

"I trust so," replied Mont. "I do not care, as I said before, to make the thing public, but it has gone far enough, and both of us must have our rights."

"And then I must get the fire and the model matters squared up and go to work on a bigger scale," added Jack. "I declare I've had adventures enough in the past four days to last me a lifetime!"

Five years have passed since the above words were spoken. Mont is now the sole owner of the Corney Tool Works, and the Mechanics' Savings Bank is once again a flourishing institution. Mr. Felix Gray has relinquished all rights to both, and is content to pass the remainder of his days in helping his nephew along the road to fortune.

Mosey recovered, and is now a steady workman. He has signed the pledge, and intends to stick to it. Corrigan was never heard of after his jump from the wagon, and no one has ever taken the trouble to find out what became of him.

Jack is now superintendent at the tool works, and besides his salary, draws a handsome royalty from his father's and his own inventions. Through Mr. Benton--who was profuse in his offers of help when he learned the true state of affairs--the patent of the improved planer was sold for four thousand dollars, of which half came to the young machinist.

Deb--Jack's best girl--is now Mrs. Monterey Gray, and though she lives in one of the finest mansions of the town, is still the true and faithful little housekeeper she always was. Meg, upon whom Mont has settled a neat sum, lives with her, and Miss Parks is a frequent and welcome visitor at the place.

A few weeks ago, while visiting at Corney, I met Deb driving out to Farmer Farrell's place, and asked her how her brother was getting on.

"Jack? Why, I declare you'd hardly know him, he's so awfully tall! And he's got a beard all over his face. Business is splendid, but then Jack always said that any one who did right, and stuck to his work, would get along!"

And Deb is right. Do you not think so, gentle reader?

*** END OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A YOUNG INVENTOR'S PLUCK ***

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